



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

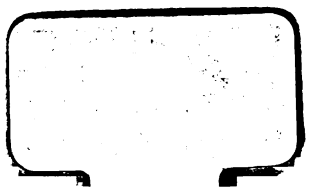
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



1







THE
JOURNEY OF SOPHIA AND EULALIE
TO THE
PALACE OF TRUE HAPPINESS.

1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 26

THE
JOURNEY
OF
SOPHIA AND EULALIE
TO THE
PALACE OF TRUE HAPPINESS.
BY A LADY.

Translated from the French by
GEORGE AMBROSE BRADBURY, -O.C.,
MOUNT ST. BERNARD'S ABBEY, LEICESTERSHIRE.

Permissu Superiorum.

LONDON:
R. WASHBOURNE, 18 PATERNOSTER ROW.
1873.

141. m. 108.



TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

IN all ages, and in all countries, Allegory has been a favourite mode of composition. It has, indeed, sometimes been recommended as affording the only, or at least the most available, means of giving a lively and intelligible representation of certain subjects or notions. The Prophets, for example, have resorted to this method, in order to convey vivid conceptions of the different virtues and vices which they wished to set before the people. Thus, when Nathan wished to make David understand the heinousness of the crime he had committed with Bethsabee, the wife of Urias, he delivered the most beautiful and touching parable of the "One little ewe lamb," which so moved David that he immediately repented of his sin. So also, when Isaias desired to foretell the future reprobation of the

Jews : in order to do so in a more vivid and striking manner, he foreshowed it under the parable of a vine-yard, from which the owner had expected grapes ; but which had brought forth nothing but wild grapes. In his wrath, therefore, he commanded that the hedge should be taken away, that it should no longer be pruned or digged ; but that it should be trodden under foot by man,—all which was a figure of the future reprobation of the Jews, and the subtraction of God's grace and protection, which was to befall them. Such allegorical figures are frequently to be met with in the Holy Scriptures. Nor is it in the Sacred Text alone that we meet with this mode of conveying instruction.—Poets of every nation have made extensive use of it. They have, as it is termed, personified the different abstractions which they have wished to set before their readers ; that is to say, they have figured them in the shape of living beings, invested with the forms and qualities naturally adapted to the character of each. Such pictures are allegories, and can be met with in great abundance in nearly all the poets. Neither have orators neglected to make use of allegorical figures, in order to attract the attention of their auditors. For instance, the address of Menenius Agrippa to his fellow citizens of Rome, as recorded by Livy, was an allegory, in

which, under the figure of a conspiracy of all the other members of the human body against the stomach, he describes a rebellion of the industrious against the wealthier orders of a State.

The work which I wish to introduce to you, dear reader, is also an allegory ; but "The Journey of Sophia and Eulalie" is not merely illustrative of *one* particular virtue ; it is, in fact, a compendium of the spiritual life. It is the history of the spiritual progress of two souls : one who had allowed herself to be deluded by Earth's deceitful and fading vanities, the other who had preserved her Baptismal innocence. This history is rendered interesting, by the beautiful and pleasing manner in which the authoress personifies the different virtues. She does not, however, while making her story interesting, forget for a single moment the object she has in view, viz., the instruction of her readers. Every page is full of earnest exhortations to the practice of those virtues which render us pleasing to God ; and the readers of this "Journey" are led step by step in the Way of Perfection. The authoress, in making use of sensible emblems and allegorical figures, never does so in such a manner as to obscure the moral she wishes to convey ; she interests, but, at the same time, she never fails to instruct her readers.

It may, perhaps, be thought by some that she inveighs somewhat vehemently against the pleasures of the world ; but when we reflect how many souls are estranged from God, and ultimately lost for all eternity through indulging in these pleasures, we shall then conclude that her language is not too strong. Again, if the readers of this little work are tempted to think that the picture of hell, as here represented by the authoress, is overdrawn, let them remember what faith teaches us upon this point, and then I think they will change their opinion. For we know that all the pains of this life are as nothing in comparison with the anguish of the damned. We know that, in that kingdom of darkness and misery, "the worm dieth not, and the fire is never extinguished ;" that there, are continual and never-ending "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth ;" that, in fine, there is everything which is most horrible and afflicting, without any hope of alleviation, and without a "single drop of water to cool the parched tongue" of the sufferers. Certainly, if we meditate seriously upon this article of our faith, we shall be forced to admit that our authoress has spoken mildly enough.

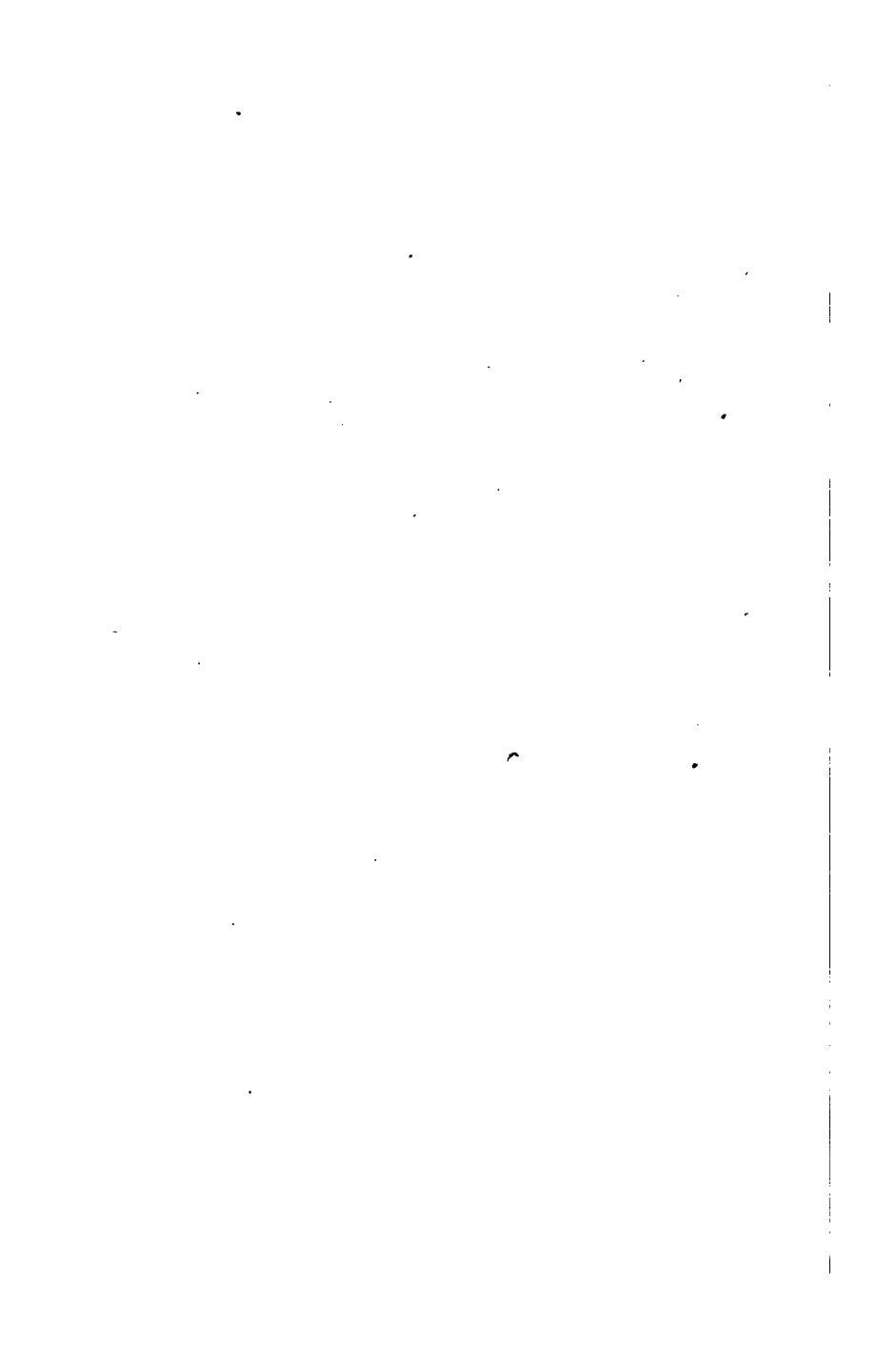
Although the translation of this work has been undertaken principally for the benefit of young persons, nevertheless all, both young and old, re-

ligious and seculars, may read it with profit, and may cull from its pages many wise and salutary maxims. They will not fail to derive edification from its perusal, and will, I doubt not, after reading this "Journey of Sophia and Eulalie," be more than ever resolved to walk with courage and perseverance in the way of perfection.

If the readers of this little work are benefited by it, I humbly, but earnestly, beg that they will pray for the Translator, that he may make such progress in the Path of Perfection, as that he may at length safely arrive at the Palace of True Happiness.

BR. AMBROSE BRADBURY.

ABBAY OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT ST. BERNARD,
LEICESTERSHIRE, EASTER, 1873.



THE PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

TO THE FRENCH EDITION.



THE Manuscript of this "Journey to the Palace of True Happiness," has been placed in our hands without a Preface ; nevertheless it deserves one, for it is a Work altogether new, not as to the doctrine, but as to the manner in which it is treated. We perceive in reading this Work, that it was written by a lady for those of her own sex ; in it she gives utterance to the language of the sublimest Devotion under pleasing and sensible images ; she speaks to the imagination, in order that reason may be induced to listen ; she speaks to the heart, that she may gain the spirit, and thus she persuades young people of the world to accomplish those things which it is often very difficult to induce them to undertake. The relation of this "Journey of Sophia and Eulalie" is a collection of moral Instructions, a chain of interesting events, or rather it is a Pious History, adorned with in-

genious emblems, allegorical figures, poetic descriptions, simple and pathetic discourses. It is in the spiritual order, a kind of Proteus which takes every form in order to insinuate itself, to please, to attach, to instruct, and to touch. We imagine that we are reading an Epic Poem without the constraint of verses and rhyme, or a Dramatic Piece without the apparatus of the theatre and without the declamation of the actors. It matters little what this marvellous "Journey" may be taken for, provided that we realize in our hearts and in our works the great truths which are taught in such an affectionate manner, and which make us feel that the Authoress is speaking the language of experience. There is nothing wearisome in this little book; it is short, and it is interesting throughout; there is nothing cold and languishing, every sentence is animated with a secret unction. We have some reason for hoping that the public will be pleased with it, and that it will induce the Authoress to publish the Work she announces in so ingenious a manner. We have some foundation for believing that her "Entertainments with Angelica" will be as agreeable, and perhaps even more useful than her "Journey of Sophia and Eulalie to the Palace of True Happiness."

APPROBATION

PREFIXED TO THE FRENCH EDITION.

I HAVE read, by order of Monseigneur the Keeper of the Seals, a Manuscript entitled : "The Journey of Sophia and Eulalie to the Palace of True Happiness." The Authoress, under sensible emblems, explains the most important truths of Morality and Religion. This work, consecrated to Virtue, can only render it amiable, and induce its readers to practise it. Given at Paris, this 19th of July, 1780.

(Signed,)

GUIDI.

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE	v
THE PUBLISHERS' PREFACE TO THE FRENCH EDITION .	xi
APPROBATION PREFIXED TO THE FRENCH EDITION .	xiii

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PALACE OF TRUE HAPPINESS	1
II. THE ERRORS OF SOPHIA IN HER YOUTH . . .	5
III. CONVERSION OF SOPHIA	7
IV. SOPHIA IS WITNESS OF THE VICTORY OF HOPE OVER DESPAIR.	10
V. TRAGIC SCENES WHICH SOPHIA WAS PERMITTED TO WITNESS FOR HER INSTRUCTION . . .	14
VI. SOPHIA IS VISITED BY GRACE	20
VII. GRACE SHOWS SOPHIA THE WAY OF PERDITION, IN ORDER TO MAKE KNOWN TO HER ITS DANGER AND ITS MOURNFUL CONSEQUENCES .	29
VIII. GRACE ALLOWS SOPHIA TO BEHOLD THE ABODE OF DEATH	40
IX. GRACE SHOWS TO SOPHIA THE DWELLING OF TARDY REPENTANCE AND FINAL IMPENITENCE	48

CHAPTER	PAGE
X. GRACE INTRODUCES SOPHIA INTO THE WAY OF SALVATION, AND GIVES HER A FAITHFUL COMPANION	60
XI. INTERVIEW BETWEEN SOPHIA AND EULALIE	66
XII. COUNSEL VISITS SOPHIA AND EULALIE	72
XIII. HOLY DESIRE COMES TO CONSOLE SOPHIA AND EULALIE IN THEIR TRIALS	84
XIV. HOLY DESIRE CONDUCTS SOPHIA AND EULALIE TO THE RETREAT OF FERVOUR	94
XV. VIGILANCE COMES TO SUCCOUR AND STRENGTHEN SOPHIA AND EULALIE AGAINST THE RAGE AND FURY OF ALL THE VICES	104
XVI. SOPHIA AND EULALIE ARRIVE NEAR THE DWELLING OF VOLUPTUOUSNESS	125
XVII. SOPHIA AND EULALIE MEET NEGLIGENCE	134
XVIII. FERVOUR, HOLY DESIRE, AND VIGILANCE RETURN TO SOPHIA AND EULALIE, AND MAKE KNOWN TO THEM THE GREAT DANGER THEY HAVE AVOIDED	139
XIX. SINCERITY UNDECEIVES SOPHIA AND EULALIE, WHO HAD BEEN DELUDED BY THE EXTERIOR OF HYPOCRISY	143
XX. SOPHIA AND EULALIE, THROUGH THE COUNSELS OF VIGILANCE, TRIUMPH OVER SELF-WILL	150
XXI. VIGILANCE DEPICTS TO SOPHIA AND EULALIE THE DEFORMITY OF ENVY AND JEALOUSY	160
XXII. SOPHIA AND EULALIE DO NOT ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE DAZZLED BY VANITY	168
XXIII. TRUTH COMES TO DEFEND SOPHIA AND EULALIE AGAINST THE DARTS OF ERROR	180

Contents.

xvii

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIV. VIGILANCE PRESERVES SOPHIA AND EULALIE FROM THE SNARES OF SELF-LOVE AND VAIN-GLORY	189
XXV. SOPHIA AND EULALIE EXPERIENCE SPIRITUAL DRYNESS	196
XXVI. WISDOM INTRODUCES SOPHIA AND EULALIE INTO THE PALACE OF VIRTUES	201
XXVII. WISDOM INDUCES SOPHIA AND EULALIE TO ENTER INTO THE SERVICE OF DIVINE LOVE.	208
XXVIII. PURITY OF INTENTION EXAMINES SOPHIA AND EULALIE	214
XXIX. SOPHIA AND EULALIE VISIT HUMILITY	221
XXX. SOPHIA AND EULALIE ENTER THE APARTMENT OF PERFECT CONTRITION	230
XXXI. DIVINE LOVE PLACES SOPHIA AND EULALIE UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF HOLY OBEDIENCE	243
XXXII. SOPHIA AND EULALIE ARRIVE AT THE PORCH OF THE TEMPLE OF HOLY PRAYER; THEY ARE CONDUCTED TO VOCAL PRAYER	253
XXXIII. SOPHIA AND EULALIE VISIT MEDITATION	257
XXXIV. LOVE CONDUCTS SOPHIA AND EULALIE TO THE ABODE OF HOLY RECOLLECTION	266
XXXV. SOPHIA AND EULALIE ARE ADMITTED INTO THE SANCTUARY OF CONTEMPLATION AND UNION WITH GOD	275
XXXVI. SOPHIA AND EULALIE FOLLOW DIVINE LOVE, CARRYING THEIR CROSSES WITH THE VIRTUE OF PATIENCE	283
XXXVII. UNIVERSAL DESTITUTION AND PERFECT DETACHMENT INTRODUCE SOPHIA AND EULALIE TO HOLY-POVERTY	300

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXXVIII. SOPHIA AND EULALIE ARRIVE AT THE APART- MENT OF VIRGINITY	309
XXXIX. SOPHIA AND EULALIE FIX THEIR ABODE WITH HOLY PERFECTION, WHERE THEY ADMIRE DIVINE CHARITY AND ALL THE OTHER VIRTUES	328
XL. SOPHIA AND EULALIE ENTER THE PALACE OF TRUE HAPPINESS	333



THE
JOURNEY OF SOPHIA AND EULALIE
TO THE
PALACE OF TRUE HAPPINESS.

CHAPTER I.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PALACE OF TRUE HAPPINESS.

THE Palace of True Happiness is situated in a sublime region above time and the tumult of the passions, above fortune and the revolutions of this perishable world, above every thought and every imagination. It is the union of every brightness, every beauty, all the delights of true felicity, and all good things which eye has never yet seen, nor the ear heard, nor hath the mind of man been able to conceive, the great and glorious things which are there prepared for them that love God. It is the eternal dwelling of all the intelligences who have arrived to the very pin-

nacle of sanctity. It is that admirable City of which the Beloved Disciple gives so magnificent a description. (Apocalypse, chaps. 21 and 22.) "It is surrounded," he says, "with a wall great and high, having twelve gates, and in the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east, three gates : and on the north, three gates : and on the south, three gates : and on the west, three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. And the city lieth in a four-square, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth. The height of the wall is a hundred and forty-four cubits. And the building of the wall thereof was of jasper stone ; but the city itself pure gold, like to clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper : the second, sapphire : the third, a chalcedony : the fourth, an emerald : the fifth, sardonix : the sixth, sardius : the seventh, chrysolite : the eighth, beryl : the ninth, a topaz : the tenth, a chrysoprasus : the eleventh, a jacinth : the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to each : and every several gate was of one several pearl. And the street of the

city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb. And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. And the nations shall walk in the light of it : and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates thereof shall not be shut by day : for there shall be no night there. And there is there a river of water of life proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb. In the midst of the street, and on both sides of the river, is the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Everything is divine in this blessed city.


"Nothing defiled shall enter therein. Only those whose names are written in the book of the Lamb shall enter, and they shall reign with Him for ever and ever," and shall be delightfully lost in the beatitude of God, who is infinitely liberal in rewarding. Such are the feeble pictures under which we can represent this "Palace of True Happiness." The way which leads to it is rough and narrow.

Nevertheless, two companions, whose names were

Sophia and Eulalie, in spite of their tender age and weak sex, undertook this painful journey. They bore all its fatigues with heroic constancy and courage. By the aid of the Virtues whom they met in their journey, they at length arrived to the worthy object of all their desires. It is the admirable and pious history of this journey which we are going to relate in a simple manner. We have not sought to adorn it with pleasing images, ingenious emblems, allegorical figures, charming descriptions. We neglect all these vain ornaments ; and it is with regret that we see them naturally finding a place in this little work. We have above all attached ourselves to moral instructions, to simple and pathetic discourses, by which it will doubtless be seen that our only desire is to speak the language of truth and the rhetoric of the heart. Happy, and a thousand times happy, if we succeed in insinuating ourselves into the souls of young persons, so as to interest them, to please them, to instruct them, and make them relish the practice of virtue. This is the sole and only aim which we have proposed to ourselves in this edifying fable.

CHAPTER II.

THE ERRORS OF SOPHIA IN HER YOUTH.

OPHIA, from her tenderest youth, was brought up in the fear of the Lord by parents who joined to their instructions the force of good example. Born with good inclinations, cultivated with care under eyes so watchful and vigilant, she made rapid progress in the paths of virtue. By her docility, her obedience, her modesty, her wisdom, and her fidelity to all her duties, she was a model of edification. But these happy beginnings were not of long duration. At the flower of her age she lost both her father and mother, and this premature death was fatal to her innocence. An uncle, who was a great lover of the world, was chosen for her guardian.


He accepted this guardianship with great pleasure, because he saw in his niece everything which could please worldly people. He spared no pains to give her an education worthy of her birth ; he procured for her the most able masters of music, dancing, drawing, and other worldly accomplishments. Sophia succeeded wonderfully in all these arts. All her time was absorbed in the study of these

profane sciences, and she no longer attended to her pious exercises. She was disgusted with them, and very soon omitted them without any scruple.

The uncle, who was highly pleased with the beauty and accomplishments of his niece, commenced to introduce her into society. Sophia was admired for the vivacity of her spirit, for the facility with which she expressed herself with grace and eloquence, and for the good taste she displayed in dress. Her self-love was flattered by the praises and adulations which were constantly bestowed upon her. She saw that she was honoured in the assemblies of worldlings, and she gave herself up to pleasure with a species of fury. Henceforth, her life was a continual round of pleasures. Concerts, balls, spectacles, intrigues, feasts, were her continual occupation. In the midst of these criminal joys she walked rapidly in the way of perdition. But let us draw a veil over all the scandals of her youth, and hasten to the period of her conversion.

CHAPTER III.

CONVERSION OF SOPHIA.

OD, however, had merciful designs upon this sinner, in spite of her ingratitude. Grace was in the end to triumph over all her resistance. One day Sophia, accompanied by her uncle, went to assist at a most splendid entertainment, which was given at a large castle in the country. It commenced by a splendid repast, at the end of which there arose a lively dispute. All the assistants were dismayed ; several headstrong persons began to quarrel violently and drew their swords. In the twinkling of an eye all the lights were extinguished, and every one, in the midst of the darkness, sought to save himself by flight. Sophia, greatly terrified, was one of the first to retire from such a dangerous place, and was saved without even thinking of her guide. Her terror being a little abated, she wished to retrace her steps in order to learn the consequences of this tragic scene, and if her uncle had been a victim ; but Providence permitted her to lose her way : instead of returning to the banqueting hall, she was lost, and wandered at length into a terrible desert, into a dry and arid

land, which seemed to have been struck with the maledictions of Heaven.

This horrible place was a true haunt of serpents, whose hisses made her tremble with fear and dread. A violent trembling agitated her whole body ; her blood seemed turning to ice in her veins, through the horror with which she was seized. The faster she walked onwards, the further she receded from the right way. Overcome by fatigue, she succumbed under the weight of so many miseries. Expecting nothing but death, and that a most afflicting one, she began to weep and groan.

“Of what use now,” she said to herself, “of what use are all the pains I took to please the world ? What have become of all its honours and pleasures ? They are vanished like a shadow ; there remains to me only the remembrance of them, and what a bitter remembrance. I ran after a chimerical happiness, and now, too late, I perceive that I was deceived. I see myself now at the gates of death ; O miserable, and the most miserable of all creatures, to whom shall I have recourse ? Shall I return to the world, the perfidy of which has seduced and ruined me ? Shall I call upon the Lord ? But how shall I dare address myself to Him after having outraged Him in so many ways ? Alas ! my offences are too many and too enormous for

me to hope for pardon. The Just Avenger of my crimes is irritated against me, and He will abandon me for ever. Already hell is open under my feet to swallow me up alive. Ah ! how happy should I now be if I had preserved the fruit of the instructions I received in my early youth ! But, because I have abused this precious time, it is now refused to me ! Oh if the God of mercy will but grant me still a few moments, with what fidelity will I employ them !”


At these words Sophia caught a glimpse of a ray of light which pierced the thick darkness with which she was surrounded, and which discovered to her that sombre solitude, the witness of her sighs and tears. At the shining of this celestial light, she was reassured ; her fears were dissipated ; the trouble and remorse of her conscience were calmed ; she felt within herself a holy joy, the sweetness of which she had not tasted for so long a time. She was astonished at this sudden change.

“ Ah, what !” she cried out in surprise, “ shall my eyes really see the Divine brightness of the Sun of Justice ? from whence comes this happiness to me ?”

As she spoke these words, the beneficent ray extended, and became clearer and more lively : this was a happy presage for her.

CHAPTER IV.

SOPHIA IS WITNESS OF THE VICTORY OF HOPE
OVER DESPAIR.

OPHIA was rejoicing in her heart over so surprising a prodigy, when a confused noise renewed her alarm. In her terrors she prayed the Lord to be propitious to her ; she had no sooner called upon God, than she perceived a man and a woman preparing for combat : these two enemies had a very different exterior ; the man was horrible ; he had the appearance of a hideous corpse, or some terrible spectre : his clothes were filthy and torn, his complexion pale and livid, his looks were wild and his lips trembling ; his armour inspired terror : upon it the ever detestable names of those who had fought under his standard were written, and who by their combats had obtained nothing but death, and that eternal.

The woman, on the contrary, was charming to behold ; the nobleness of her gait announced the nobleness of her extraction ; wisdom shone in her countenance, her eyes were full of sweetness, truth rested on her lips. A rich golden coloured embroidery adorned the modest green garment with

which she was clothed ; her firm and assured step inspired confidence, and clearly showed the strength with which she was filled ; everything in her was ravishing : it sufficed to look upon her to love her and to desire to walk in her footsteps.

She held in her right hand an anchor, upon which the names of the illustrious persons who had ranged themselves under her banner were engraved, and who, by her assistance, had vanquished all their enemies.

Sophia, in just admiration, impatiently desired to see what was going to happen ; she heard a voice pronounce distinctly these words : "The Conqueror shall enjoy immortal glory."

This was the signal for the combat. The two irreconcilable enemies then drew near to each other, and commenced to struggle for the victory ; it was not long uncertain. The admirable woman, endowed with strength from on High, gloriously threw down her adversary ; seized the lance with which he had endeavoured to pierce her, struck him with his own arms, and laid him dead at her feet.

At this moment, Celestial Spirits commenced a melodious concert ; in their harmonious songs, they continually repeated : "Despair is vanquished, Hope hath triumphed ; let us sing her victory :

live for ever, live for ever, holy Hope." One of these blessed spirits adorned the head of Hope with a bright diadem: others presented to her palms and laurels arranged in the form of crowns.

Sophia, enchanted with what she had just seen and heard, cried out also in a transport of joy: "Live for ever, live for ever, holy Hope."

Then this beautiful Virtue turned towards her and said to her with a smiling countenance, and at the same time showing her a crown: "See, my daughter, see the crown which is prepared for you; it only remains for you to merit it. Make use of me to sustain and animate your faith, and you will march on securely in the paths of innocence. Trust in God, cast yourself into His arms, and be persuaded that He will not forsake you, nor leave you to fall."

At the same time holy Hope disappeared, that is to say, Sophia saw her no more with her bodily eyes; but her soul was altogether ravished by her, and intimately penetrated with her. A sweet and tranquil peace had succeeded to her trouble and diffidence. Animated with a courage which she could not comprehend, she arose and advanced towards the place from whence the light had first appeared; she stood upright, her arms crossed upon her breast, and her eyes uplifted to heaven. By

the assistance of the Divine light, with which she was enlightened, she entered into herself, she searched into the innermost depths of her heart ; the sight of her ingratitude to the Supreme Majesty appeared horrible to her ; the weight of her iniquities overwhelmed her ; but considering the infinite goodness of God, who had just given her such sensible marks of His tenderness, she testified to Him her gratitude for them. As she was thus expressing her gratitude, sometimes by tears of sincere contrition, sometimes by canticles of praise, she heard some one running with great speed ; she thought it was a deliverer or a guide whom the Lord had sent to her ; but this happy moment had not yet arrived.

CHAPTER V.

TRAGIC SCENES WHICH SOPHIA WAS PERMITTED
TO WITNESS FOR HER INSTRUCTION.



THE theatre of the world was still to present to Sophia some tragic scenes, in order that she might see the image of her former errors, and that she might thus be inspired with a lively repentance.

The first actor who appeared was a young man dressed as a hunter. He carried a bow and a quiver filled with arrows ; his clothes were wet with perspiration and covered with dust. Although exhausted with fatigue, he ran with great speed. Nothing was capable of stopping him ; he cleared everything which obstructed his path. The object of his pursuit was a bird which carried some flowers in its beak ; it seemed as if this little animal was playing with the embarrassment of its enemy. Scarcely was he in reach of being caught, than he fled away and allowed some of the flowers to fall. The hunter was eager to gather them up ; but as soon as he touched them they stung and pricked him severely. This ought to have made him enter into himself—but no, nothing stopped

him, he redoubled his course with still greater energy. Whatever might be the cost, he wished to have this bird. Sophia was astonished at his obstinacy, and attributed it to a species of madness, when she heard a sweet voice speaking to this foolish youth : “ My son,” said the voice, “ my son, will you never cease to run after your own destruction ? you seek pleasure, and it flies from you. A frivolous amusement draws you on, and it escapes from you every moment. Shall you never be wise ? During the many years I have called you with goodness and kindness, you have been deaf to my invitations ; for your soul’s sake allow yourself to be touched ; render yourself docile. I will make you taste much more solid consolations. They will be a foretaste of the incomprehensible felicity which I am preparing for you. If you persist in your revolt you will be plunged into eternal misery and woe. Once more, my son, I say, take care ; time is short—heap not up the measure of your iniquities ; push not my patience further.

This young man, instead of listening to these salutary remonstrances, stopped his ears, forced himself still to run on, and without perceiving it, he was precipitated into a deep abyss. He then became aware (but too late, alas !) of the consequences of his obstinacy. “ Behold me,” he cried,

with a strong and terrible voice, "Behold me, lost through my own fault. O madness ! O hell ! O eternity !"

Echo repeated these despairing words several times, and Sophia heard them with unequalled fear and trembling. All troubled, she deplored in herself the irreparable woe of this foolish young man ; but quickly her spirit rose, and she applied to herself this fatal example. "O my soul," she said to herself, "recognise in thyself the features which characterised this unfortunate youth. The world was thy idol as it was his ; thou didst desire nothing but its foolish joys ; thy God pressed thee, threatened thee, and thou didst despise His threats and His reproaches ; He knocked at the door of thy heart, and thou didst refuse Him entrance. O Heaven ! I tremble to think of it. If the Lord had cut me down in the midst of my sins, what would have become of me ? Hell would now have been my portion ; I should have been a victim of its devouring flames. My God has preserved me from so great a misery ; He has given me time to repent and amend. Who, therefore, has stopped His avenging arm ? Why has not the sword of justice struck me ? It is simply His immense goodness, and the infinite love He has for me. O my God, how good Thou art ! how amiable Thou art ! I

will eternally sing the greatness of Thy mercy and love for me."

Sophia was still continuing her thanksgivings, when she saw drawing near a man, dressed in a magnificent style. His garments shone with gold and precious stones; luxury and vanity had displayed all their most flattering attire; his bearing was haughty and contemptuous; he imagined himself to be the master of the world; he directed his steps towards a steep mountain, and his discourse expressed his pride. "I *will* rise," said he, "whatever it may cost. I will attain the very summit of greatness and honour. All those who oppose my designs shall feel the effect of my indignation."

At the same moment appeared another man, bearing a long list of old titles, and dressed with great simplicity.

"Who are you?" he cried out, with an inflamed and angry countenance, "who are you, to aspire to the dignity which is due to me? My birth, my protectors, assure to me the elevation which you wish to rob me of; your rapid fortune has not effaced the baseness of your extraction. You ought to crawl in the dust before me, and you should be of the number of my vassals."

The man of wealth was highly indignant at such language; he keenly felt the insult, and wished to

have satisfaction on the spot. They both began to place themselves in a state of defence; the spirit of vengeance took possession of them; the man of title struck down the other, and ran his sword through the body of his opponent. He congratulated himself on his victory; he thought to establish himself on the ruin of his adversary, when a sudden earthquake shook the whole mountain; the earth opened beneath his feet, and swallowed him up all covered as he was with the blood of his brother. Heaven held the murderer in horror, and hastened to deliver the earth of this monster.

Sophia, extremely attentive, was struck with so surprising an event. She prostrated herself before the rock which served her for a seat, and watered it with her tears; she confessed to God that she had only too well merited the unhappy lot of these unfortunate men. "Like them," she said, "I sought only to satisfy my pride and my ambition. I desired to rule and to be the first everywhere. If a rival disputed with me the place of honour, I was filled with jealousy, and thought only of avenging myself. I employed the most odious means to disparage and supplant this enemy. If my pernicious design was crowned with success, I rejoiced over her misfortune and fall. I gloried in seeing a

multitude of young men follow after me, and devote themselves to my service like slaves ; their praises and adulations were to me an incense of the most agreeable fragrance. How many souls, how many innocent souls have I not ruined by my immodest dress and free manners ! I bore upon my lips, in my looks, and in my whole exterior, a poison artfully prepared ; I wished for nothing but to insinuate it in every heart and to make conquests with it. Ah ! Lord, the sight of so many abominations plunges me in the greatest sadness. Nothing now but my sorrow can speak. O, my God, I have only sighs and tears to present to you : be not insensible ; have pity on this sinner, this too famous sinner ; forget, pardon me my errors ; you have already commenced to draw me from them, finish, consummate your work."

CHAPTER VI.

SOPHIA IS VISITED BY GRACE.



OPHIA lifted up her eyes and hands to implore the Divine assistance, when she perceived a lady of perfect beauty. All that we admire here below cannot be compared to her. Her countenance beaming with benevolence declared that she had come only to bestow benefits. A beautiful soft light illuminated her whole body. Her buckler, helmet, and her whole armour made known the strength with which she was clothed. Everything in this venerable Lady was supernatural.

Sophia ran to meet her, and cast herself at her feet, saying: "Is it you, O illustrious Lady, who are going to deliver me from my corporal and spiritual miseries? My heart languishes and is consumed with sorrow; my soul is fainting within me, and is melted like wax before the fire, and is poured out like water; my eyes are fountains of tears; my mouth is opened only to utter cries and lamentations."

"Yes," answered the lady with a grave and majestic tone, "if you are obedient to my voice I will work your deliverance; I will rescue you from the

bondage of sin and from the tyranny of Satan. I am—listen well—I am Grace, that cherished daughter of the Most High. It is by my agency that He pours with boundless liberality upon mortals His most precious favours. I am given to all without exception. It is I who always make the first advances. He who makes good use of my gifts, will certainly obtain more considerable ones. I commence by pointing out the way of salvation, I give the desire of entering into this way, I teach the means of walking in it, and I give all necessary assistance to arrive happily and safely at the end of the journey. Through me hope buds forth, I procure its increase, and it becomes an excellent tree, bearing fruits of life. I excite those ineffable sighs which pierce the clouds. I bestow that abundant dew which dilates the heart, and which renders it sensible to the love of the Sovereign Good. I exceedingly love all men, because the Immaculate Lamb hath given His blood and His life for their redemption; I carry them in my bosom; if they are ungrateful and abandon me, fly from me, resist me, I have still compassion on their fragility. I speak to them with tenderness; treat them with indulgence, await them with patience; I seek them, urge them, pursue them with an incredible ardour, and it is always in spite of myself that

I yield to their hard heartedness and insensibility."

Sophia, rapt in admiration at such consoling words, burst into amorous complaints and said: "O Beneficent Grace, who dost produce so many prodigies, why did you not call me sooner? Why did you leave me to sigh so long a time after a chimerical happiness? Why did you tarry so long to trouble my fatal security? Why"

"What are you saying, my dear child?" answered Grace, with a gracious tone of voice; "you offend and outrage my love for you. Learn then that my cares have preceded your birth, and that until this hour I have not ceased to watch over you. The chain of my benefits has never been interrupted, and my gaze has been fixed upon you with particular complaisance and predilection. It will be sufficient to cast a glance over your whole life to be convinced of this."

"O daughter of Heaven!" cried out Sophia, prostrating herself with her face to the earth, "how do these words cover me with confusion."

"Fear not, my child," answered Grace. "It is not to reproach you with the bad use which you have made of my gifts, that I have just traced you such a faithful picture of them; it is to persuade

you to make henceforth a better use of them, Rise, therefore, and listen attentively to my words,—

“Before your birth, I was occupied with you, virtuous parents were provided for you, and took care of your early education. Conceived in sin, a slave of the devil, I hastened to wash you in the vivifying waters—I clothed you with a robe of innocence which made you the Temple of the Holy Ghost, a child of God, a member of His Son, and heir of eternal glory. In your cradle, I confided you to the care of a Guardian Angel, who has been and shall always be your consolation, your succour, your support and your strength. Scarcely was your reason developed, than I anointed you with holy oil, which made you a brave soldier of Jesus Christ, ready to defend His faith, even at the cost of your blood and your life. In your youth, I inspired you with a respectful and filial fear of the Lord, which made you dread displeasing Him; and it was through me that His yoke was easy and His burden light. If some weaknesses, or faults of human fragility escaped you, I was eager to raise you up after these little falls, and I hastened to purify you in the waters of contrition and salutary confession. After having conducted you unto the age of discretion in the paths of justice, I ad-

mitted you to a feast prepared by Uncreated Wisdom.

“The Bread of Angels became the food of your soul. You frequently approached this delicious banquet, and you always departed more firmly established in good, and more enkindled with the fire of Divine love. At this happy time you were the confidant of my secrets. I frequently entertained myself with you; and in these familiar entertainments, I enlightened your spirit with a living light. The contemplation of the perfections and works of God filled you with astonishment and admiration, and made you desire to lose all thought and esteem of self, in order that you might be altogether absorbed in the love of the Sovereign Good. I poured upon your soul a sweet and fruitful rain which softened it, which disposed it to receive the influence of the celestial gifts, and rendered it capable of producing abundant fruits of holiness. I enkindled in your heart a furnace, the ever active flames of which bore all your affections towards that ravishing Beauty who was the Object, and at the same time the Source of them. During these intimate communications, you experienced a joy and tasted a peace beyond all expression. But this holy unction and these ineffable sweetnesses were not capable of fixing you

All my cares, after the death of your father and mother, soon became useless.

“ I unceasingly repeated to you, that you ought to attach yourself wholly and solely to the True Love, which is God, whose perfections are boundless, and whose love is without measure. But your heart, deaf to my voice, preferred the perishable charms of a mortal creature to the incomprehensible love of the Divine Creator. You wished then for a friend who should be the confidant of your secrets and the sweetness of your life. An uncle, whom the Lord by an effect of His mercy has just delivered you from, (dispense me from relating to you his unhappy lot), an uncle so unworthy of being charged with your guardianship, presented this friend to you and gave you a charming portrait of her. He procured you every facility of seeing and conversing with her at all times ; O to what precipices did this dangerous companion conduct you !

“ It was then with the greatest pain and sorrow that I saw you deliver yourself up without fear to that slave of the world, and unite in friendship with her, who was labouring to root out of your heart all the good sentiments with which I had filled it. Soon, very soon, the entertainments of this daughter of Satan effaced from your memory

all holy and Christian thoughts, in order to infatuate you with the maxims and vanities of the world. Your soul, until then pure and innocent, and which had always been ignorant of the art of satisfying the passions, then, alas ! began to regard these passions as pardonable weaknesses ; you followed them with this daughter of Satan without remorse, and her example was your only guide. In this state you quickly forgot the Lord your God. His love was extinguished in your heart, the love of the world took its place, and you desired only the pleasures of the senses : you became like to the prodigal son, dissipating all the goods which your Heavenly Father bestowed upon you. Touched with compassion at the sight of your miseries, I was desirous, from the first moment of your wanderings, to recall you to yourself. I endeavoured to excite in your soul while yet a novice in crime, salutary remorse ; but the voice of the world was preferred to mine, and all my cares were useless. You fled from me, ungrateful soul, from me who sought to benefit you, and you fled from me only to run after a deceitful pleasure which called you in order to seduce you, and which seemed to caress you and favour you ; but only to pierce you the more easily with its cruel darts."

At this sad narrative of her wanderings, Sophia

burst into tears. Her sighs and groans ascended to the Throne of the Eternal ; she confessed her faults with the most profound humility, and she implored the Lord to pardon her iniquities. After these lively expressions of sorrow, she asked Grace, who had shown so much charity towards her, if she could in a moment surmount the resistance of her heart.

“ Do not doubt it,” answered this lady. “ There is, no heart so hard, that I cannot vanquish it. I have by my sweetness drawn to myself, a woman who was a sinner, and have made of her a holy lover of Jesus. By the force of my arm, I have struck Saul to the earth ; and from a furious persecutor of the rising Church, I changed him into a vessel of election. The Most High makes use of me to strike in this manner whom He pleases, and when He pleases. It would be the greatest presumption to expect these miraculous interventions. You must make use of ordinary aids, if you wish to merit my greatest favours. Men render themselves unworthy of my assistance by the contempt with which they treat it ; I refuse my inestimable benefits to those who tread them under foot. Admire, therefore, the infinite goodness of the Lord in your regard.

“ His justice required that I should abandon you, and that I should leave you in your blindness to

punish you for your ingratitude and revolt : but by a wonderful effect of His immense mercy, He has ordered me to break the chains which attached you to sin. It is for this reason that he has engaged me to lead you into this horrible solitude; I caused to shine upon you a ray of light which enlightened your spirit and touched your heart. To consummate this marvellous work of your conversion, I came to you myself to instruct you and to save you. If from this time you will be faithful to your God, He will forget all the past, and He will take pleasure in bestowing upon you His choicest gifts."


Sophia being penetrated with sorrow and joy at the same time, knew not how to express the different sentiments which arose in her soul. Sometimes she called heaven and earth to witness the extreme displeasure and piercing regret which afflicted her heart. Then she invited all creatures to join with her in blessing the Lord, and in thanking Him for all His benefits. At the same moment, a thousand attentive echoes repeated with her : "How good Thou art, O my God ! how infinite is Thy love for me ! I will sing the greatness of Thy mercies for ever and ever !"

Then she thanked Grace in most grateful terms, not only for all the care she had taken of her

during her childhood and youth, but above all for the multiplied prodigies which she had just operated in her behalf. She most humbly begged this Lady to continue her inestimable benefits, and she promised inviolable fidelity to her instructions.

CHAPTER VII.

GRACE SHOWS SOPHIA THE WAY OF PERDITION,
IN ORDER TO MAKE KNOWN TO HER ITS DANGER
AND ITS MOURNFUL CONSEQUENCES.

RACE, satisfied with the dispositions of Sophia, took her by the hand and led her from that dreadful solitude, where her tears of sorrow had flowed in great abundance. This excellent Mistress, to inspire her young disciple with a more lively horror of the errors and wanderings of her past life, conducted her to the entrance of that way of perdition which she had formerly followed with so much ardour.

Sophia, therefore, saw once more all the pomps and vanities of the world. The deceitful brilliancy of its voluptuous entertainments shone again before her eyes ; but under the protection of Grace, she was not, as heretofore, dazzled by its false

splendour, nor was her heart touched by its fading vanities.

That broad and spacious way was at first presented to her gaze with all its charms and enchantments ; she saw those who followed this attracting way, walking through pleasant fields, every moment gathering flowers which appeared to grow under their feet, and after gathering them they crowned themselves with them, displaying the greatest eagerness. Some, in the midst of delight, ran eagerly after pleasures and diversions ; others, preceded by Idleness, and followed by Intemperance, delivered themselves without reserve to Sensuality ; others, favoured by Fortune, proudly displayed the most sumptuous luxury, and a fastidiousness which knew no bounds. Every one in this way, so charming in appearance, had his favourite passion, which he adored in public and in private. Several even offered to all the passions their incense and homage.

Sophia witnessed a continual change of scenes which presented new spectacles every moment. She saw magnificent edifices, the elegance of which was equal to the most superb Palaces : in some, young people of both sexes, having ascended a stage, by the softness of their voice, the tenderness of their sighs, the immodesty of their gestures, and

the seduction of their words, distilled into the hearts of the spectators the poison of immodest love. In other places she heard a thousand enchanting voices, accompanied with all kinds of instruments, who, by their licentious songs and sweet melodious harmony, softened the soul, and rendered it sensible to the most shameful passions. Again she saw magnificent saloons adorned by Gallantry, where sensual and effeminate youths and young girls without modesty and reserve, danced and revelled with unmeasured ardour. By the vivacity of their looks, and their sportive, playful manners, they sought only to communicate to each other the impure fire with which they burned. Then she saw numerous assemblies, where each one desired only to satisfy their unrestrained and mad desire of pleasure and joy.

After having delivered themselves to every excess, Sophia saw them depart from these asylums of every vice, and go about the streets of the infamous Babylon. They ran about as if mad, and everywhere gave the greatest scandal. After this Sophia beheld on another side pleasure gardens, where art endeavouring to surpass nature, produced rich and beautiful flowers, arranged in the most agreeable and attracting manner. Young girls, dressed as Goddesses, seemed to be disputing with

the spring flowers their colours and attractions. A multitude of idle flatterers followed them, and bestowed upon them excessive praises of their grace and beauty. These adulators esteemed it honourable to be ranked among the number of the slaves and adorers of the Goddesses. But while these worldly girls triumphed at seeing themselves surrounded by so many courtiers, Sophia saw some old men who had grown grey in iniquity, teaching to the young of both sexes their pernicious maxims. They craftily laid snares for these innocent ones; they gave them lessons in the art of seducing; taught them to concoct secret intrigues, and made them acquainted with the means of ensuring success.

When the hour had come to quit these public places, all these idle people returned to their homes, where sumptuous repasts, prepared by Delicacy, awaited them. Their tables were loaded with the most exquisite viands. Dissolution accompanied all these feasts. To these repasts succeeded gambling, which was as ruinous as criminal. The dawning of the Aurora induced them to go to beds prepared by Softness, where they reposed from the fatigues of the night. The sun was already in the midst of its course when they were still buried in sleep, and they rose only to deliver themselves anew to all kinds of sensual pleasures.

The less corrupted amused themselves by building large castles, in which gold and silver shone in great profusion. All the treasures which earth contains in her bosom appeared to be destined to content their pride and ambition. The rarest marbles, the most precious stones, the richest metals, were lavishly employed: the houses of these sinners far outshone in pomp and decoration, the temples of the thrice Holy God. Others, with but little wit, placed all their glory in fine equipages which appeared to fly in the air, so light and elegant were they. These people endeavoured to surpass each other in the beauty of their ornaments, the number of horses, and the multitude of domestics. In fine, Sophia saw everywhere the works of Pride and Vanity. She perceived nothing but entertainments, feasts, superfluous expenses: she heard nothing but exclamations of licentious joy and the tumultuous cry of the Passions. All those who walked in this horrible broad road of perdition, sought after nothing but pleasure and the satisfaction of their unlawful desires, and they were precipitated into the greatest disorders.

Sophia, a witness of so much excess, poured forth a torrent of tears through the bitter remembrance of her past iniquities. In the errors of these blind worldlings, she saw with the keenest

regret only a too faithful picture of her former wanderings ; she wept over the time she had lost in all these profane diversions : she was inconsolable. In her confusion she dared not look upon the face of her deliverer, nor speak one word to her.

Grace, full of goodness towards her young pupil, wished to establish her in such holy dispositions. For this purpose she allowed a ray of light to escape from her, by means of which Sophia saw the chimerical happiness of these pretended happy worldlings.

She discovered with some astonishment that all glory here below is but a vain phantom, that the riches of this world are nought else than greatest indigence, and that its pleasures are true evils. She saw all these lovers of the world plunged in an immense sea of miseries which overwhelmed them in the midst of their delights ; she noticed that all of them were assailed with fears, inquietudes, disgust, vexations, pains, and bitterness. That young lady, who appeared so gay and so full of mirth, was in constant dread of meeting with her parents, of whom she was the shame and the anguish. She fled from them, and avoided them with the greatest care, in order not to draw upon herself their just reproaches, and the consequences

of their resentment. The loss of her innocence caused her a thousand piercing regrets; she was torn by the remorse of an alarmed conscience, which left her no repose.

Again she saw that voluptuous one, who, in the flower of his age, thought only of satisfying his irregular desires and his brutal passions, was already stricken with infirmities which rendered him old in the midst of his prime, and condemned him to pass the remainder of his fast fading life in desolating languor. Then she saw one who, a little while ago, was held in highest honour, and surrounded with flatterers, who paid court to him, but who was now the unhappy victim of capricious Fortune. By a most fatal reverse he was reduced to beggary, and became the by-word of every one. In his misfortune, he abandoned himself to all the fury of despair. He cursed the day in which he was born, and uttered all kinds of maledictions against those who had hastened his fall.

Sophia likewise gazed upon some old men burdened with the weight of years, who still preserved all their former love of pleasure and dissipation. Rejected and despised by the world, in which they could no longer make themselves agreeable, they were in greatest desolation at seeing themselves cast aside by an ungrateful master, for whom

formerly they had so much love and attachment.

This Disciple of Grace penetrated also into the circle of diversions, where the partisans of the world consume their best days ; she saw the blackness of Envy, the baseness of Jealousy, the poison of Slander, and the gall of Satire reigning there. Those who were their miserable victims dared not even complain. They were obliged to restrain themselves, and to hide under a false exterior the secret sadness which devoured them. Here, was a woman infatuated with her beauty who had suffered for several hours the most insupportable torture in order to enhance her fragile attractions by vain attire, and who, after so many multiplied pains, had the mortification of hearing a rival extolled whom she did not believe worthy to be compared to her. To make the matter still worse, she was compelled to hide her chagrin, and give the most favourable reception to her whom she wished to annihilate. There, was one intoxicated with her merit and pretended talents, who endeavoured to shine by ingenious and studied repartee. She wearied herself in measuring and compassing her words, so that she might give to her discourse a pleasing and happy turn ; but another person, more natural, more lively, more pleasing, fixed the

attention of all, drew upon herself the esteem of everyone, and even forced this would-be attractive person herself to applaud the triumph of her rival.

Sophia also perceived that the most refined Policy exercised his influence in these assemblies, which in appearance were so delightful and agreeable. All were received with the most sincere marks of friendship. Nothing was to be seen but flattering receptions, nothing heard but demonstrations of esteem and oaths of inviolable attachment : but, O perfidy ! O duplicity of a deceitful world ! Those who had just been overwhelmed with caresses, and who had received a thousand praises, had no sooner departed than they speedily became the subject of conversation. They laughed at their figure, railed at their conduct, mocked their manners. Those who knew of no faults to lay to the charge of these absent ones, wickedly invented some ; all, in fine, took a malignant pleasure in backbiting and calumniating them. The greatest enemies of these subjects of satire and raillery could have desired no sweeter revenge than that they should be compelled to listen to the stinging words, and feel the sharp arrows which were darted at them.

Sophia was indignant at witnessing so much perfidy. She continued to look upon the hypo-

crisy of the perverse world which promises so many goods, and which gives so many evils. She followed the ambitious man blinded with the smoke of honours, and she saw him crawling at the feet of the great, delivering himself up to all that is mean and disagreeable in flattery, swallowing the haughtiness and caprice of a protector, who made him purchase, at the price of a thousand humiliating services, favours which he frequently promised, but often did not grant. She perceived the avaricious man employing his health and strength to accumulate wealth, riches, and treasures. He was poor in the midst of riches; he was in want of necessary things in the midst of abundance. Alarm, Care, and Chagrin were his companions; he led a sad, obscure, and miserable life. O how hard, how bitter a bondage is the idolatry of riches! She gazed also upon that young man brought up in the midst of delights, seeking after and desiring everything that could flatter the senses. She perceived that he was the most miserable of men. Always discontented with his lot, he unceasingly formed desires which could never satisfy him; he pictured to himself a thousand imaginary needs which only augmented his torment; he languished under the odious laws of Softness, and he sacrificed his honour, his repose, his fortune to please an idol


of flesh with which he was foolishly smitten. If he obtained some favours from this cherished object, what cares, what anxiety, what assiduity did they cost him ! What reproaches, what caprice did he have to endure to merit them ! Scarcely did he enjoy that which he had so eagerly sought after, than he experienced a mortal disgust for it. No creature could fix the inconstancy of his heart, and he found anguish where often he thought to find happiness.

While Sophia, by the aid of the light which enlightened her, was making profitable reflections upon all these human miseries, Grace invited her to look farther on. This obedient Disciple did so ; and what was her surprise, when she discovered that this way, so spacious and so pleasant, was extremely short, and surrounded with thick darkness, which struck the soul with terror and desolation ! She asked her Benefactress the reason of this. Grace answered : “ ‘ The figure of this world passeth away ’ (1 Cor. vii. 31). It is like a theatrical decoration, which appears and disappears in the twinkling of an eye. ‘ It is a vapour which appeareth for a little, and then passeth away ’ (James iv. 15). It is an impetuous torrent which sweepeth all before it. The great ones of the earth make some noise for a time, but they quickly

vanish from sight. They scarcely perceive the rapidity of their course. The shades of death surprise them, and they then (but, alas ! too late) find out their blindness and misery."

CHAPTER VIII.

GRACE ALLOWS SOPHIA TO BEHOLD THE ABODE
OF DEATH.

HE last words which Sophia had just heard, prepared her for the new objects upon which she was now to fix her gaze. Nevertheless, she trembled with terror, when Grace, by the aid of the sombre glimmer of lighted torches, caused her to see that sad region where Death exercises his power. Everything in this abode of tears, inspires fear and consternation. It is surrounded with dark cypresses, to which are attached sepulchral lamps, which serve only to augment the horror of this terrible retreat. Nothing is heard but the mournful and piercing cries of night birds, which excite in the heart trouble and confusion. On every side tombs arise where the ashes of the monarch and those of the subject are confounded together. The ground is strewn with dry bones and dead corpses, which exhale an infectious odour.

In the midst of all this spoil, watered with so many tears, there is a heap of crowns and sceptres gathered carefully together, which form a superb seat. It is upon this throne that Death, armed with his terrible sickle, is seated. With a mocking smile he treads under foot these trophies of all human greatness, heretofore so brilliant and so much sought after, but now without lustre and without renown. He takes a cruel pleasure in beholding the potentates of earth fall under his blows and the happy of the world lying prostrate before him ; he is surrounded by a numerous troop of satellites who form his court. They are called Sicknesses. - These famous enchantresses spread desolation everywhere. Those whom they touch cannot defend themselves from their charms. Langnor quickly seizes upon them, and shortly they are without strength and nearly without movement. These implacable enemies of the human race then immediately seize them, and without any difficulty carry them to the feet of Death to receive the fatal blow which is to cut them off from the number of the living.

Those who escape the pursuit of these furious women are sure to draw upon themselves the indignation of their proud sovereign. Death in anger comes himself with great rapidity, to cut the

thread of their days ; strikes one when going to a spectacle, another in the midst of a splendid feast ; this one in the midst of debauchery, that one just as he has attained the highest honours ; this girl while she is enjoying herself at a ball, that worldly woman at her toilette. No one is sheltered securely from his terrible darts. The tenderest age, the most flourishing health, the strongest constitution, cannot resist his supreme power. He has no regard for rich or poor, strong or feeble, young or old. Nothing is capable of softening him. In vain does the desolate wife make the air resound with her cries at the sight of a cherished husband whom she is upon the point of losing. Death without pity, and insensible to her sorrow, takes away this dear object of her tenderness. An afflicted mother bathes with her tears the pale corpse of her only son whom she holds in her arms : Death, deaf to her cries, tears and groans, snatches from her bosom that child so worthy of her love and precipitates him into the dark tomb.

Around the bed of that virtuous young man stand his friends, who are inconsolable ; they deplore his lot ; they use every effort to preserve his life ; but inexorable Death, being offended at their resistance to his laws, comes promptly to take out of their hands that virtuous friend, their model and

their consolation. In a word, this imperious king, proud of the power which he has received from the Creator of all things, gathers into his garner all mortals without mercy and without distinction. Even emperors, in spite of their immense riches, the extent of their power, and the multitude of their guards, tremble at his approach and are conquered by him.

While Sophia, in great consternation, was regarding the inflexibility of Death, and the hard and severe manner he exercises his power, Grace told her to lend an attentive ear to the lamentable cries which resound in these places. Thereupon she heard a confused noise of sighs, groans, sobs, and plaintive cries. She wished to know from whence these lively expressions of profound sorrow proceeded ; she drew near and then perceived all those happy worldlings whom she had seen in the *way of perdition*. All these worldlings had now arrived to the term of their chimerical happiness ; they were at the gates of the abode of Death, and they could by no means withdraw. Terror had seized their souls : despair had taken possession of their heart : their blood ran cold ; they now gave vent to useless regrets of a life spent in delights, and utterly void of any preparation for eternity.

“Fools that we are,” they cried out, “we have

despised a God who invited us to return to Him ; we endeavoured to fly from His presence ; we rejected the infinite goods He offered us ; now, we call upon Him, but He hears us not ; we seek Him, but he hides His face ; we can no longer find Him. We have abused the time He gave us, now time is granted us no longer : nothing now remains but the despair, rage and anguish of the damned. We wandered in paths of iniquity ; it is our own fault that we have been drawn away by bad example. The Lord has spared nothing to free us from this evil. He has done all He could to save us, and we have done all we could to bring about our ruin. Perfidious World, thou has forged our chains ! Shameful Passions, ye have prepared the horrible instruments of our torture ! Mournful Pleasures, criminal Voluptuousness, ye have enkindled the avenging fires which ever burn and never consume ! Of what use is it now that we have followed your tyrannical laws, since through this, we are now precipitated into the abyss of Hell."

Then, strange convulsions agitated their bodies ; they redoubled their cries, and gave vent to heart-rending lamentations. They vomited against their Creator a thousand blasphemies, a thousand imprecations ; in their transports of fury, they endeavoured to repulse Death, and to deliver themselves

from his importunate visit. Vain efforts ! their last moment had come. Death struck on every side without pity, he spared no one. All fell beneath his terrible sickle.

Sophia, all trembling, believed she saw Death turning towards her with threatening countenance, she thought she heard his sentence thundering in her ear. Being seized with horror, she sighed and wept continually, saying : " O seducing world, thus then is terminated thy fastidiousness and thy greatness ! This is the end of thy pleasures ! and it is to a misery as astonishing as it is irreparable, that thy false promises and detestable maxims conduct us."

" Yes, my dear child," said Grace, " it is thus that Death eclipses the vanities of the world. When he presents himself to the guilty, he in an instant takes away all their pretended felicity. Their flattering hopes vanish ; Death shows them the emptiness and nothingness of all created things. He teaches them that in placing their glory and happiness in riches and honours, they lean upon a broken reed ; Death opens their eyes, but too late ; he agitates, fatigues, torments them ; he overwhelms them with superfluous and useless regrets, insincere repentances, bitter remembrances, devouring remorse : in fine, he conducts them to and casts them

in the most terrible despair. Ah ! how terrible is Death to the impenitent sinner ! Ah ! 'It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' (Heb. x. 31,) of a God who is a just avenger of crime and wickedness.

"Such would have been your lot, my dear child, if Death had overtaken you a few days ago. But be of good cheer : the Lord, by an effect of His infinite mercy, has wrought in you a most marvellous change. He has disabused you of the follies of the world ; He has inspired you with the desire of belonging entirely to Him ; He has charged me to conduct you in the way of salvation in quite a particular manner. Ah ! in this way of peace, how agreeable, how desirable is Death, although so terrible to the sinner ! In this path of holiness, he is no longer a cruel and hideous monster, the simple sight of whom terrifies and makes his victims utter sharp and bitter cries. Oh no ! he is a sweet friend whom they call upon, seek after, and find full of beauty and charms. The just, so dear to God, with joy behold the approach of their last hour. They invite their well-beloved Death to break speedily the bonds which bind to earth. 'My friend, my dear, my faithful friend,' they say to him, 'tarry no longer, deliver me from this body of sin which prevents me from flying to the object of my

love. Come, take me to my Father ; come, unite me to my loving Spouse. I languish and pine for Him : delay no longer to terminate my torment.' Who can express their transports when they see Death at their side, who with a smiling countenance extends to them his hand ? ' O happy day !' they cry out ; ' O moment full of sweet attractions ! at length I am going to see my God who has possessed my heart : I am going to possess Him for whom I have so long sighed. O earth, O land of exile ! how joyfully I quit you ! Already I have broken every chain which binds me to created objects. I regret nothing in this land of pilgrimage, and I run with eager joy to repose in the bosom of my Sovereign Good.'

" It is thus that the virtuous soul intimately united to God during life, enters into the joy of her Lord. It is thus that Death introduces her into the *Palace of true Happiness* ! where her Well-Beloved awaits her to crown her with His gifts, to honour her with His chaste caresses, and to inebriate her with the abundance of sweetness for all eternity. This is the incomprehensible felicity which is destined for you, my dear child, if you are always obedient to my voice."

CHAPTER IX.

GRACE SHOWS TO SOPHIA THE DWELLING OF
TARDY REPENTANCE AND FINAL IMPENITENCE.



HE last words of Grace gave a little consolation to Sophia. She began to breathe a little more freely and to be less terrified when all at once her liberatrix transported her beyond the Empire of Death. Sophia found herself so promptly at the entrance of the infernal prisons, that she knew not if she had arrived there bodily, or only in spirit. Objects a thousand times more terrible than those she had already seen struck her gaze, and made her tremble with terror. She first of all discovered two victims of the Divine anger, upon whom fell the whole weight of the most dreadful vengeance. They are called Tardy Repentance and Final Impenitence. These odious persons unceasingly draw with them into this horrible gulf, a multitude of hardened sinners.

The first was laden with extremely heavy chains ; he uttered sharp cries and terrifying shouts ; he formed bitter and useless regrets ; he ceased not to weep over his miserable destiny ; he fought against himself and became his own executioner ; he tore out his hair ; lacerated his face with his nails ; bit

his arms with horrible grinding and gnashing of teeth ; struck his head and breast, and all this less to punish himself than to take away a life which was a continual and cruel anguish. Vain efforts ! which only gave a new activity to his rage and despair.

Sophia saw Final Impenitence extended over burning coals, and surrounded with flames. Fire came out of her eyes, her ears, her nostrils, and mouth ; she vomited forth execrable blasphemies against the Author of her being. In exhaling her hatred against her Creator, she writhed upon this fatal couch, where she found no solace to her misery. It was in this painful and dolorous situation that she drank to the very dregs the chalice of the anger of an avenging God. She, together with Tardy Repentance, lifted up their voices and cried with all their strength : " Cursed, and a thousand times cursed be the day of our birth. Why did we ever find our place in time ? Why did we not perish in our mother's womb ? Ah ! miserable wretches that we are, we cannot remember that we have been upon earth, without being penetrated with desolating remorse. Enchanting pleasures, which have flattered us, you have vanished as a dream. Oh ! how bitterly we repent for having loved you ! We are lost, and we are lost because we have willed

it. Behold us damned for all eternity ! O how this avowal drives us to despair ! Yes, it is through our own fault that we are deprived of all those treasures which were reserved for us, and that we are for ever reduced to the greatest indigence. I have despised," said Tardy Repentance, "the voice of the Lord which called me to Him, and now behold me in an unfathomable abyss of torments, out of which I can never depart."

"God," cried out Final Impenitence, "has an infinite number of times made me feel the effects of His mercy, and I have constantly disdained, rejected, and trodden them under foot : most truly I deserve to be the victim of His implacable vengeance." Then they cried out together—O what pain ! O ever-gnawing worm ! O demons ! O devouring flames ! Are you then henceforth to be our inheritance ? O deplorable misfortune, which we could easily have avoided ! O inexorable Judge, lay then Thy hands upon us, and make us feel all the weight of Thy inflexible justice ! O how hard it is to comprehend the excess of this misery, for which there is no remedy. O sad, O mournful experience !"

Sophia was almost beside herself ; her blood seemed frozen in her veins ; she was immovable ; she dared not lift her eyes. But Grace, who wished to make known to her all the punishments

which Divine Justice reserves for impenitent sinners, ordered her to cast a glance upon that ocean of sulphur and pitch, which is of vast and boundless extent.

She obeyed, and perceived in those waves of fire, an infinite multitude of guilty sinners crowded together ; she recognised also all those Worldlings whom she had remarked in the Way of Perdition, and whom Death had just cut down. She saw them delivered to torments infinite in their nature and duration.

The trouble of Sophia was so great, and her soul was so struck with terror, that she saw all these objects only in a confused manner. Grace assisting her feebleness, made her distinguish the different torments with which God punishes the crimes committed against His Supreme Majesty, crimes which have not been blotted out by penance. She saw the Voluptuous, who had sought only to satisfy their brutal passions ; the Rich, avaricious and without pity, who made a god of their gold ; the Ambitious, who had sacrificed their most sacred interests to the idol of Fortune, or to a phantom of vain glory ; those women, slaves of vanity, who, by their immodest attire, had seduced so many innocent souls. She saw also those useless servants, who, without committing enormous sins, had neg-

lected to practise good works ; she saw them now bound hand and foot in this dismal prison. In a word, she saw all those hardened sinners who had always lived at enmity with God, all of them penetrated with a fire so subtle, that it pierced to the very marrow of their bones. She remarked that this fire, in comparison of which our fire is but a picture, acted with greater strength and vivacity upon the most guilty, and that it tormented them in proportion to the greatness and multiplicity of their crimes.

Grace also caused her young pupil to observe that the damned suffer an insatiable hunger and a burning thirst ; that the more they have been brought up and nourished in delicacies, the more they feel the lively ardour of this hunger and thirst. Instead of those exquisite meats and delicious wines which were abundantly furnished them by Sensuality and Intemperance, they have now no other food and drink than gall and bitterness.

So far, Grace had allowed some rays of light to escape from her person, which, being reflected upon Sophia, moderated a little the excess of her terror. But she suddenly drew a veil, and retained the light which had hitherto spared her Disciple a part of the horrors of these infernal dungeons. Then Sophia was surrounded on every side with a thick

dark cloud. She cast herself then into the arms of her Mistress, who reanimated her courage, and told her that this was the profound darkness and obscurity of Hell which had even reached to her. She then recognised that all the damned were plunged in horrible darkness, and that it was only by the sombre glimmer of the fire which consumed them, that they could perceive the terrible and horrible situation of their dwelling-place.

Grace commanded Sophia to look upon some of the most criminal, and in particular upon Christians who have dishonoured, profaned the sacred character of their Baptism, and who have received from their Saviour so many favours.

Sophia complied with these orders, and saw these unfortunate ones surrounded with serpents and vipers, which wound around their arms and bodies, and unceasingly bit and gnawed them on every side. She saw them also seized by terrible dragons who tore them with their talons, poisoned them with their breath, and infected them with an insupportable stench. To all these venomous reptiles were joined terrible Furies, who emulated each other in the cruel pleasure of making these poor victims of the Divine vengeance suffer more and more. Rage, with inflamed eyes and foaming mouth, communicated to them all his fury ; Envy,

pale and wan, stirred them up against each other and goaded them on to overwhelm each other with atrocious injuries and cutting reproaches ; Sadness, with his livid complexion, filled their hearts with weariness, bitterness, and useless regrets ; Fear, all trembling, penetrated them with terror and anguish ; Pain, weeping, and in tears, brought such desolation to their soul, that they seemed to die every moment, yet continued to live ; Despair, more furious than all the rest, made them participators of his agitation and frenzy, and caused them to vomit against their God the most abominable imprecations ; at the same time enraged demons cast these unfortunate wretches into cauldrons of boiling oil, and drew them out only to exercise all their malice upon them.

Sophia in utter consternation at the sight of the multiplied and aggravated pains of Hell, believed that it was not possible either to express or imagine the sufferings which the damned endure in this horrible place, where all kinds of misery, evil, and pain are united together in an infinite degree, to avenge the sacrilegious profanation of the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. But what was her surprise when Grace informed her that she had only seen a part of the anguish of the damned.

This excellent Mistress then caused her to see

the friend who formerly had given her so much scandal, and such bad example, and who had drawn her into all the follies of this perverse world. "Listen," said Grace to her, "listen to the strong expressions of her pain, and you will perceive that she is more tormented by the privation of the presence of her God than by all the other evils she endures.

Sophia listened, and heard her former criminal companion cry out : " O heaven, behold me for ever separated from my God ! See me condemned to behold Him no more ! I have for ever lost all hope of possessing my God, my only Good, and my last end ! O avenging God ! Thou hast nothing more terrible in the treasures of Thy anger, than this total separation from Thee ! O despairing thought ! God is no longer mine, and I am no longer His ! I have lost God ; and to lose God, is to lose all—it is to be sovereignly miserable. O God, my Creator, my Father, my Saviour ! Thou hast now become my Judge, my enemy, my persecutor. I have nothing to expect from Thee but contempt and reproach. I see Thee for ever arming Thy thunderbolts against me. Must I for ever, in spite of myself, endeavour to spring towards this centre of repose and happiness, and then for ever be repulsed with disdain, indignation, and horror ? O

God ! I know that Thou art infinitely perfect, infinitely amiable, infinitely beautiful ; yet I am forced to detest Thy attractions, to hate Thy perfections ! I was destined to be the object of Thy sweetest complacence, and now I shall for ever be the object of Thy most implacable hatred. O incomprehensible torment ! O torment which cruelly rends all the powers of my soul ! O torment more painful than all other tortures I endure !”

Sophia was greatly troubled at what she saw and heard. Her painful reflections at the sight of a former friend, who from the midst of the flames declared aloud the irreparable loss of her God, cast her into a species of lethargy. Grace roused her, and said to her : “ My dear child, profit by the misfortune of your pernicious companion, and cease not to thank the Lord for having, by a prodigy of mercy, called you to Him. Be assured, also, that what renders the anguish of the damned more cruel, more sensible, more insupportable, is to know that they will never be delivered. The time of mercy has passed for them. Their sins will never be blotted out, and they will for ever be punished for them. Their pains will never end ; they will have for ever to bear the weight of Divine vengeance. They will never behold the Incomparable

Beauty ; they will never enjoy the company of the Angels and Blessed in heaven. Always imprisoned in these infernal dungeons, they will only see demons, they will be fed with darkness and misery ; they will breathe nothing but flames, they will always suffer, and never die. Eternity, terrible Eternity will overwhelm them every instant with its heavy burden. Every moment entire Eternity will be represented to their spirit. They will be always cursing themselves ; always reproaching themselves for their crimes ; always despairing. They will never be able to drive away the afflicting thought that they have lost their God by their own fault. With the keenest pain they will remember their past pleasures, which have brought them to the place of inexhaustible sorrow, and never-ending pain and misery. For ever ! . . . For ever ! . . . Eternity ! . . . What is more to be feared ? What is more worthy of serious thought and reflection ? For ever damned, for ever cursed, for ever the execration of all creatures. For ever hated by God, and always deprived of His blissful presence. Never any consolation, never any end, never any solace to their sufferings. Eternity which is always beginning, and which never ends : Eternity which, after millions of ages, will still be commencing.

"Ah ! my daughter," continued Grace, "consider now how horrible a thing mortal sin is, since the Lord punishes it with so much severity ; yea, punishes those very creatures (who commit this dreadful evil) whom He has drawn out of nothing in order to make them participators of eternal happiness. O horrible lot of the damned, how much art thou to be feared."

"Ah ! my tender mother," replied Sophia, "this deplorable lot would have been mine without your adorable and miraculous protection. Alas ! I cannot think of it without pouring forth torrents of tears. If you had not, through unspeakable charity, stopped me in my criminal career, I should have been precipitated into this dreadful abyss. Hell would now have been my portion, if Death had cut me off a few days since. I should have been cast into exterior darkness, where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. O Divine Benefactress ! what shall I render to you for having drawn me from this dreadful fate ? What must I do to show my gratitude for your inestimable gifts and favours ?"

"Obey me," answered Grace, "and follow all my inspirations."

"My heart is ready, my heart is ready," said Sophia ; "I am willing to do anything to atone

for my past conduct. Ah ! how blind I was to run so ardently after fleeting pleasures, full of bitterness, and punished with inexpressible torments. O Justice of my God which I adore, how terrible thou art ! For a moment's satisfaction, an eternity of anguish : for the short enjoyment of perishable goods, the eternal privation of a God, who contains in Himself every delight that can possibly be desired. O how foolish men are, to reject an incomprehensible felicity, and plunge themselves into an ocean of misery ! My choice is now made : Farewell to worldly pleasures, I desire no longer to walk in this corrupted way, which conducts to irreparable woe ; too long have I followed in the footsteps of a perfidious world. Now I wish to seek my God, my Well-Beloved, and to walk in the way which leads direct to Him. You have promised, O cherished daughter of the Most High, to introduce me into this Path of Holiness, into that Way which will happily lead me to the *Palace of True Happiness*. Ah ! I implore you delay no longer : I deliver myself into your hands, I cast myself into your arms, I lean with confidence upon you, my beneficent protectress. Have pity on a feeble and miserable child, whose only hope is in you, who will listen only to you, and who abandons herself without reserve to you in all things."

Grace complied with the earnest and pressing request of Sophia, and led her from this region of darkness and horror.

CHAPTER X.

GRACE INTRODUCES SOPHIA INTO THE WAY OF SALVATION, AND GIVES HER A FAITHFUL COMPANION.

SOPHIA was overwhelmed with joy at once more beholding the light of day. She ceased not to return most humble and hearty thanks to her protectress, and to renew the oaths of inviolable fidelity to her. Grace, taking advantage of the happy dispositions with which she had herself inspired her pupil, transported her to the entrance of the *Way of Salvation*.

This way, so delightful to the faithful soul, has nothing which is agreeable to nature: for those who know not what is solid sweetness, there is in this road something which is even repulsive and disgusting. The door is small and low, the path extremely narrow and very rugged. There are many thorns and briars in the way, the sharp pricks of which it is impossible to avoid; but

nevertheless, there are beautiful flowers, whose lively colours and fragrant odour make the travellers forget the fatigues of the journey. Springs of living water are to be met with which flow with a sweet murmur, and which in pleasant windings flow on even to the very entrance of the *Palace of True Happiness*. What is more surprising, is the fact that in the most dry and arid places, the most excellent fruits are gathered, which have the gift of restoring youth, of fortifying and strengthening the most delicate, and of making them capable of sustaining the most painful labours. There are no unbridled and unlawful pleasures allowed in this Way of Salvation. All those things which form the pretended felicity of blind worldlings are forbidden. The travellers in this way are not dazzled by honours, nor by the splendour of riches; they are drawn only by peaceable, amiable, and modest virtues. Nothing but crosses are presented to the pilgrims in this journey, their only model is the crucified God-Man, who has first trod this path, and who has watered it with His sweat, His tears, and His Blood. Before entering upon this journey, the travellers are told that in this royal way humility is the only greatness they will find, that voluntary poverty will be their only riches, and that the consolations with which the Lord favours His

servants will be their only delights. In fine, they are told that in order to be admitted amongst the number of the Disciples of a God who has humbled Himself to become Man, and to die upon the cross, they must deny themselves, mortify their passions, destroy self-will, deprive themselves of all sensual pleasures, and crucify the flesh.

The austere appearance of the guardians of the entrance to this narrow way, and the apparent rigour of their maxims terrify the greater part of men. Those cowardly and pusillanimous souls who fear the least constraint, fly from this path, and this the only certain way to the *Palace of True Happiness*, is almost entirely abandoned.

Sophia was greatly astonished to see so many Christians forsake the service of the Lord, and range themselves under the standard of the Demon. She expressed her surprise to Grace, and asked if she was always to walk alone in this new way, since no one appeared to present themselves to be introduced into it. Compassionating Grace pardoned this slight disquietude of her dear pupil, and answered in a plaintive tone: "Alas! it is true, my child, that nothing is so strange as the extreme indifference Christians manifest for their eternal welfare. They take no care of the soul, but are entirely occupied in providing for the body, which

must quickly return to dust. They disdain to take one step for a God who would bestow upon them a torrent of delights, of which He is the source. It is this criminal and unreasonable conduct which renders the Way of Salvation so deserted and solitary, and this is the reason that so great a number turn back. But be of good cheer, the Lord has still faithful Disciples, zealous servants who silence the voice of nature in order to listen to the voice of the Most High. Those favourites and well-beloved of His are still to be seen who seek to please Him, and strive earnestly to follow in the footsteps of their adorable Redeemer.

“No, my daughter, you will not be the only one in the Way of Salvation. There is a particular and very dear friend of the Celestial Spouse, who is destined to be your companion. Look at that young child, humbly prostrate in that little Oratory yonder. Her eyes bathed in tears and fixed upon the Holy City, express her ardent and longing desires ; she beholds God alone, she hears God alone, she seeks God alone, she longs for God alone, she loves God alone, and this God, full of love, visits her, and reposes in her soul with amorous complacence.”

Sophia could not refrain from admiring this young person, beautiful as the Aurora, kneeling

before a crucifix, her arms crossed upon her breast, and praying with tenderest and heartfelt devotion. She was enchanted with her piety ; she envied her happiness ; she desired to behold in herself the sentiments of this amiable child. Ravished and edified at so touching a spectacle, she begged Grace to tell her who this terrestrial Angel was.

Grace willingly complied with her desire.

"This holy child," she said to Sophia, "is called Eulalie. She is only ten years of age, and nevertheless she is preparing herself with incredible fervour to receive the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. She languishes with the desire of receiving her Divine Spouse. The Lamb without spot is hastening to establish His dwelling in this soul which is so dear to Him. That which renders her so precious in the sight of God, is, that by a singular favour, she is still clothed with her first robe of innocence. Always faithful to God, always obedient to my voice, mortal sin has never stained the purity of her heart. I have taken care to instruct her from her very cradle ; I myself guided all her steps, directed all her affections to the Lord ; I formed all her thoughts and presided over all her actions. She has always allowed herself to be conducted by my inspirations, and she has never resisted my will ; she is ignorant of the passions, she

knows not vice, she despises the world, she treads under foot all kinds of vanity, and virtue alone, has charms for her. Such is the companion I have chosen for you. Receive her from my hand to overcome with her all difficulties, and to surmount all the obstacles which you may meet with in your long journey to the *Palace of True Happiness*. Go to her, unite yourself to her by the bonds of solid piety. By the sweetness of this holy union, upon which the Almighty is going to pour His most abundant benedictions, pains and fatigue will appear light and agreeable to you. There will be between you a noble emulation as to which of the two shall better serve the Lord, and you will esteem yourselves happier according as you are able to suffer greater things for the King of Kings. I will send you in a short time an experienced and enlightened guide, who will point out to you the surest means of arriving at this desired term. Remember now what I say, submit yourself to him in all things, and execute his orders without reasoning upon them, and with the greatest exactness."

As Grace concluded these last words, she allowed Sophia to pass through the narrow gate, and thus she entered the *Way of Salvation*. At the same moment Grace became invisible. Sophia believed herself entirely deprived of her presence, because

she no longer saw her with her bodily eyes ; but she experienced within herself such perfect contentment, that she knew very well that this Mother of virtues was still near to assist and encourage her. Then, full of joy, she hastened to unite herself to her, whom God Himself (by the ministry of Grace) had given her to be her friend and companion.

CHAPTER XI.

INTERVIEW BETWEEN SOPHIA AND EULALIE.



S Sophia drew nearer to Eulalie, she felt increasing in her heart a tender love for this soul so privileged by the Most High. She esteemed herself highly favoured by the Lord, to be associated in His service with this little Seraph living in mortal flesh. When she approached her she said in a few words, that being advised by Grace, she desired to contract with her a holy friendship, which should have God for its beginning and its end. Eulalie, who was a model of obedience, gave a very gracious reception to Sophia. They gave each other the kiss of peace as a pledge of lasting affection. Grace, who invisibly presided at this interview, united them together

by indissoluble and sacred bonds ; and God from highest heaven poured upon them most abundant benedictions. After the first testimonies of Christian friendship were over, they began to speak heart to heart, and imparted to each other the innermost sentiments of their souls.

“ My dear Eulalie,” said Sophia, “ in what happy dispositions do I find you, how delightful and pleasing is the situation in which I behold you, full of peace and tranquillity, removed from the world, insensible to frivolous pleasures, occupied solely with God, thinking only of Him and His love.”

“ Ah !” answered Eulalie with a lively ardour, “ who can refrain from loving this adorable object ? He has so many attractions, He has so many charms ; is it possible for any heart to remain insensible to His love ?”

“ Yes,” answered Sophia, “ there are, alas ! too many insensible to the attractions of this God of love : you, who are so innocent, are ignorant of this misery. Alas ! the greater part of men, not only are not inflamed with holy love, but they even forget God, they despise His benefits, they outrage His goodness. There was a time when I myself, alas ! was among this number, I had for my Sovereign Good a monstrous indifference, and I repaid His benefits with the blackest ingratitude.”

“ Ah !” cried out Eulalie, with charming simplicity, “ how miserable you must then have been, my dear Sophia ! Without doubt you now bitterly regret this time spent so uselessly. Surely now it is an inexhaustible subject of tears, and you are inconsolable at having ceased even for a moment to love this most perfect and amiable Spouse. I am persuaded that you now desire to repair your infidelity ; love Him, therefore, from this time, without measure, without limit, with an undivided heart, and for ever.”

As she concluded these words she presented a Crucifix to Sophia, and said to her : “ Embrace with me, my dear friend, this image of the Crucified. Let us kiss the wounds of our sweet Saviour ; and protest to Him a thousand times, that we will love none but Him.”

Sophia could not refrain from weeping, upon beholding the fervour of this admirable child ; she willingly yielded to her invitation. They kissed a hundred and a hundred times the sacred sign of our Redemption. Eulalie shed tears of consolation, and Sophia shed tears of sorrow. They thus passed some moments uniting their sighs and tears to the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Eulalie could have employed entire days in thus testifying to her Divine Lover, sincere and sensible marks of affection.

"How you cover me with confusion," said Sophia to her companion, "why have I not, like you, always been docile to Grace, and faithful to my God ; but, O regret, which pierces my heart, my life was a continual chain of sins against the best and tenderest of Fathers. Still, although through my own fault, I am deprived of your innocence, I have at least now your fervour and your love ; I will endeavour to make amends for the past, and to console Him for all the displeasure which my innumerable revolts has caused Him : but, alas ! I am cold and tepid in the service of the Lord, who has always infinitely loved me."

"Our God," replied Eulalie, "is full of mercy ; He has without doubt pardoned the offences of which you so sincerely repent. Let us, therefore, sing of His incomparable benefits. Let us never cease to praise Him, and above all let us allow ourselves to be consumed in His celestial flames of love."

"All my footsteps," said Sophia, "have been marked with miracles of His bounty."

"Every moment of my life," answered Eulalie, "has witnessed the prodigies of His love."

"He has preserved me from so many dangers," said Sophia, "He has delivered me from so many evils, He has prevented me from falling over so many frightful precipices, that a thousand lives are

not sufficient to testify my gratitude for all His mercies."

"He has preserved me with so much care," said Eulalie, "He has surrounded me with such clear light, He has enriched me with so many gifts, he has so abundantly poured His graces upon me, that eternity will scarcely suffice for me to express the transports of my gratitude."

"Let us love," they cried out together, "let us love with the whole extent of our beings a God so liberal, a God whose delight is to be with the children of men."

After these ejaculations of love, a thousand times reiterated, Eulalie proposed to Sophia, that henceforth they should live together in the same house, and pass their days in pious exercises which should be common to both. She showed her a small hut, surrounded with trees, the only furniture of which was two seats and some mats.

"This little solitude," said Eulalie, "will serve for a retreat during the night, and in the day-time we will go to the Oratory to contemplate the Eternal beauty of our Well-Beloved, and to render to Him our respectful homage. We shall only leave this place to assist at the august Sacrifice of the Lamb without stain ; in this profound peace, removed from the tumult of the world, separated

from all creatures, we shall find a secure asylum. We will think of nothing but God, who is the only Love of our souls."

"This project," answered Sophia, "is very edifying; it pleases me much; and most willingly would I follow it, if it harmonised with the designs of the Lord. But you must know, my dear Eulalie, that we have still a long way to go. We are only at the commencement of our journey, and God wills that we should perform it together. I am still ignorant of the means He intends to use to bring us to the haven where we desire to be; but I know that very soon a wise and prudent guide will be given to us to direct our steps in the way that leads to the Palace of True Happiness. Grace has promised me this; and I believe that her promise will most certainly be fulfilled."

Eulalie received the orders of this daughter of the Most High with the profoundest respect, and disposed herself to follow them with the most prompt and exact submission.

"I acknowledge," said she, "my error, and I condemn my cowardice. I only sought after rest, and God requires me to labour. It is not the time to enjoy the sweetness of repose, when we have done nothing to merit it. It is enough, O Lord, I wish to go wherever it shall please Thee. Teach

Thou my hands to war, and my fingers to fight ;
give me wings to fly to Thee, make me suffer, and
give me constancy to persevere in Thy service."


"How happy shall we be," said Sophia, "when we walk in the footsteps of our Crucified Saviour, when we prove our love, not by mere words, but by works and sacrifices, as much more pleasing to Him, as they are more painful to nature."

"Come, then, my dear friend," answered Eulalie, "let us depart, let us quit all without regret, let us forget creatures, and go wherever the voice of God calls us."

Eulalie was still speaking, when Sophia perceived a venerable old man coming towards them. She called the attention of her companion to him, and said that doubtless he was the guide whom Grace had promised them.

CHAPTER XII.

COUNSEL VISITS SOPHIA AND EULALIE.

OPHIA was not deceived. This venerable person, this worthy minister of the Most High was Counsel, who came to point out to them the true way which leads to the Palace of True Happiness. This admirable man

possessed a very pleasing and amiable exterior, which clearly showed his interior virtues. His affable manners inspired confidence. The majestic gravity which shone upon his countenance rendered him extremely venerable. Wisdom directed his speech, and all his words were so many oracles.

Sophia and Eulalie congratulated each other, and esteemed themselves very fortunate in the possession of so virtuous and experienced a guide. As with singular pleasure they observed the authority of the Lord engraven upon his forehead, they cast themselves at his feet, and craved his benediction. This great Pontiff willingly bestowed it upon them and prayed to Almighty God for them, imploring Him to bestow upon them His most abundant favours. Then he bid them rise, and gave them some salutary advice and instruction.

"It is not sufficient," he said, "my dear children, to be introduced into the narrow Way of Salvation. Many have like you entered upon this way ; and because they have looked back, they have lost their first fervour, yea, and have lost it through their own fault. To arrive at the end of this perfect way, you must walk according to the will of the Lord. This way is the Royal way of the Cross. Mortification of the passions, self renouncement, to fly the world and its vain pleasures,

to endeavour to please God in all things ; these are virtues which you must constantly practise. The Palace of True Happiness suffers violence, and it is only those who do violence to themselves, who will enter there. It is only by many pains and labours, that you will obtain the crown of the blessed. Do not deceive yourselves, my daughters, this is not a place of diversion. Do not expect sensible satisfactions ; rather expect many enemies to fight with, many pains to suffer, many sacrifices to make, and many dangers to avoid. Nevertheless, remain firm in the midst of the temptations with which you may be assailed. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. If sufferings are the inheritance of the friends of the Lord, this God of Goodness gives them strength to triumph gloriously over their enemies. Listen not to the complaints of nature ; consider only Jesus Christ your Divine model all covered with wounds for love of you. He has first trod this path sown with thorns and briars ; see everywhere the traces of His blood ; follow this King of Kings, and never lose sight of Him ; remember that if He has given you a part of His pains, it is in order to make you participators in His glory, and to prepare you to reign with him for ever."

Sophia and Eulalie, encouraged by these words,

promised their wise guide to imitate as far as possible, the adorable Model he had proposed to them. Counsel desiring to attach them to the perpetual observance of their Saviour's laws, and being anxious to guide their steps in a safe and secure manner, continued to instruct them.

"Nothing," said he, "is more essential to those who have recently entered the service of God, than to have certain marks by which they may distinguish the right path. It is very easy to wander out of the way, if you do not listen to the voice of the Sovereign Pastor. There are an infinite number of ravenous wolves mixed with the flock of Jesus Christ, who incessantly labour to devour these cherished sheep. Ah ! how many of these innocent sheep allow themselves to be seduced ! To avoid this misfortune, look upon that river which flows with majestic rapidity.* Having

* The Church like a mighty river, continues her course whatever obstacles she may meet with. In spite of the vicissitudes of time, the opposition of men and the rage of devils, she will continue to exist till time shall be no more, when the Church Militant shall be united for ever to the Church Triumphant. If we adhere closely to the Church of God, obey her laws, listen to her voice (for it is in reality the voice of the Holy Spirit who dwells in her), and are in all things her faithful and obedient children ; we shall infallibly obtain eternal life. This is what our authoress wishes to teach by the symbol of the majestic

emanated from the bosom of the Most High, it conducted Adam and Eve into the garden of delights. Afterwards, obedient to the word of Him who formed it, it did not abandon our first parents in their place of penance after they had fallen. It assisted them by the sweetness of its beneficent waters in all their trials and tribulations. This faithful conductor of the children of God, whose number daily diminished, seemed lost, except one little stream; nevertheless this little stream preserved itself pure and without stain amid the waves of the universal deluge. After the avenging waters had retired, the living waters of this mysterious river were soon seen, it continued to flow, extend and multiply more and more. The sons of men having again separated from the sons of God, this divine river, obedient to the voice of the Supreme Being, always accompanied His children, and was their inseparable guide. It followed them in their journey, going with them from city to city. It was with this people of God when in bondage, and aided them to bear the heavy yoke of the Egyptians. The Almighty having broken their bonds asunder, this river went with

river, the course of which Sophia and Eulalie were to follow constantly, and by so doing they ultimately reached the Palace of True Happiness.—*Translator.*

them through the Red Sea, and was with them in the desert during forty years. Then it entered with this blessed nation into the Land of Promise ; it there became the most beautiful ornament and greatest riches of the land. This people so favoured by God, enjoyed upon the happy borders of this river, abundant repose and perfect felicity. But having violated their faith, and broken the covenant they had made with the Lord, God, who still loved them, wished to convert them by means of chastisements ; He therefore allowed proud Babylon to rise up against them, and lead them into captivity. This beneficent river followed them again into the place of their bondage ; it lightened their heavy chains, and consoled them in their pains. After seventy years of bitter servitude, God, who loveth to show mercy, brought back His well-beloved children into the blessed land which He had given them for an inheritance. This river, their most precious treasure, again returned to water their dear city, Jerusalem ; it caused the sweetness of liberty to reign anew, and the Holy City was re-peopled with virtuous inhabitants. At last the time foretold by the Prophets arrived, the Messiah was born, and this Divine Mediator gave His life to redeem a guilty world. Men then thought that this admirable river was buried with Him in the

tomb, but they were deceived; it flowed again with so much force and rapidity, that it broke through all the obstacles which the powers of hell opposed to its passage. It soon flowed through every part of the world. Therefore, my dear children, follow constantly the way which it marks out for you; walk always upon its sacred borders; quench your thirst only in its living waters which spring up unto eternal life."

Sophia and Eulalie received the sublime lessons of Counsel with humble submission, they promised faithfully to put them in practice. They expressed to him their gratitude for the care he was pleased to take in conducting them in the right way. Being accompanied by their guide, they arrived near a very clear fountain the crystalline water of which flowed in abundance, and filled a large reservoir. This water, so abundant, had a surprising virtue. To be delivered from the most dangerous and mortal sicknesses, it was sufficient to wash in this pool. Grace had already made known to Sophia the innumerable wounds with which her soul was afflicted. From that moment she suffered extreme pain in the presence of the God of purity and holiness, defiled as she was with so many and so great stains. She sighed continually for the moment in which she should be purified from them.

Counsel, who knew her desires, ordained her to make to him in private an humble confession of all her spiritual miseries, and to join to this confession a sincere repentance. After having heard her, he gave her some salutary advice, told her to make an act of sincere contrition, and to enter confidently into the sacred bath, which the Saviour has prepared to heal all the infirmities of His children. Sophia eagerly and joyfully obeyed. Eulalie imitated in all things her dear companion. She confessed to Counsel her little faults and frailties, which she reproached herself with as if they had been great crimes, and with so much compunction, that this venerable man was moved even to tears. With a heart broken with sorrow, she then plunged into the vivifying waters. After having received in these sanctifying waters the benediction of the holy Pontiff Counsel, they perceived that an altogether marvellous change had been wrought in them. The soul of Sophia returned to life and recovered its former beauty. Her wounds were healed, and she felt herself released from the great burden which had so heavily oppressed her. As for the young Eulalie, she was filled with new strength and vigour. Her robe of innocence which she had always preserved, regained the brilliant splendour of its first purity.

Counsel seeing these spiritual children of his overwhelmed with an effusion of the Divine mercies, was anxious that they should gather the fruits of this abundance of grace. He told them that in order to accomplish the designs of the Saviour, they must accept the imposition of some penance in order thus to repair, as far as possible, the outrage committed against the Divine Majesty by sin. Sophia bathed in tears readily offered herself to accomplish everything which was commanded her. This charitable Physician prescribed her practices of mortification conformable to her age, her position, and as much as possible, to the greatness of her past iniquities. He promised her that if she accomplished these with punctuality and in union with the merits of Jesus Christ, she would thus disarm the anger of the Lord, avenge the outrage done to Him, and obtain inestimable favours. Eulalie, that child so privileged, earnestly requested sharp and rude penances, and in her fervour she was grieved that they were not granted to her. Counsel, with his ordinary prudence, granted something, in order to satisfy her ardent desires. Nevertheless he accommodated himself to the delicacy of her constitution, and also had regard to the purity of her soul.

Both having faithfully and with humble submis-

sion accomplished the painful works imposed upon them, came out of this sacred bath filled with a perfect contentment, and with greater courage to endure the fatigues of their journey to the Palace of True Happiness. Eulalie had for a long time ardently desired to receive her God, and to be fed with the Bread of Angels ; but Counsel, in order to try her, still delayed for a short time to grant her this benefit of benefits. During this delay, her tender piety augmented every moment. She ran to meet the object of her love with incredible speed. She invoked Him with transports of love ; she gave vent to the most inflamed ejaculations of desire to receive Him ; she prayed Him with charming and edifying simplicity, to satisfy the ardent longings of her heart.

“Come,” she cried out a thousand times a day, “come, my Spouse, my Well-Beloved, my All, my good Jesus ; oh ! hasten, tarry no longer, I languish with love ; I can no longer live without you ; I am dying through your long absence. Ah ! when shall I possess the God that I so vehemently desire ? When shall it be permitted me to hold Him in my heart, to adore Him, to tell Him that I love Him, to embrace Him, to clasp Him to my bosom, and to give Him a thousand chaste caresses. Ah ! how far distant is this moment still ! O my Saviour,

shorten the time of this cruel martyrdom ; let the aurora of this beautiful day which shall be the most delightful of my life, speedily arise."

Sophia joined her dear friend in these touching effusions. She desired no less ardently to be filled with this Living Bread. At length Counsel seeing these two fervent companions entirely purified by penance, conducted them near an altar, where the Adorable Victim was immolated by Divine Love. They saw the Lamb without stain, who was at the same time the Priest and the Victim, become the nourishment of their souls.

Sophia received her Creator and Saviour with the most profound humility, the most perfect adoration, and the most lively gratitude. Then, a new life animated her soul. A sacred fire was enkindled in her heart. Her spirit, enlightened with celestial light, henceforth saw nothing delightful on earth. All her thoughts and desires were raised to the Sovereign Good, and her one and only thought was how she might please the Lord.

But who can express the sentiments of the young Eulalie, and her rapturous joy ? Who can comprehend the torrent of delights, with which her Well-Beloved inundated her soul ? Ah ! my God, we must know the price of innocence, and how dear it

is to Thee, in order to explain worthily all your marvellous operations in this soul. Counsel gazed with admiration at the foot of the altar, on one side a penitent soul confounded at the sight of her unworthiness, and in utter astonishment at the infinite mercies of the Lord ; on the other side, a soul, always pure, who spoke to her God no other words than burning and tender ejaculations of love. Counsel allowed them several hours to enjoy in peace the entertainments of their amiable Spouse. Then he told them it was time to depart, and gave them once more wise and salutary advice. Above all, he recommended them to be constantly on their guard, to beware of the snares of their enemies, and never to listen to any of these artful seducers. " If you are faithful," he added, " to all that I have just prescribed, I will certainly conduct you to the Palace of Virtues, and after that to the Palace of True Happiness, to that sojourn of peace, where amidst inexpressible delights, you will behold the Sovereign Beauty face to face."

This venerable man then continued his journey, and the two sincere friends followed him, with a courage and constancy far beyond their age and strength. Sometimes he quitted them for a day and allowed them to walk alone, in order that these chaste doves might offer to God some sacrifices, as

much more agreeable in His eyes, according as they were more voluntary.*

CHAPTER XIII.

HOLY DESIRE COMES TO CONSOLE SOPHIA AND EULALIE IN THEIR TRIALS.



AS there are no roses without thorns, neither are there any true virtues without trials. The Lord who wished to lead Sophia and Eulalie to great perfection, often gave them occasion to show their love for Him by their humble and cheerful submission to sufferings. These faithful companions in the absence of Counsel, soon perceived the crosses he had foretold. The road became extremely difficult and rugged. They frequently met with terrible precipices and were in danger of falling over them. Thick darkness surrounded them on every side. They could only observe the terrifying situation in which they were placed by a feeble glimmer, and even this seemed to show itself with regret. They saw each moment

* The authoress does not by any means intend in this passage to depreciate the virtue of obedience, which elsewhere she highly extols ; but simply desires to show how important it is, to perform not only what is commanded, but also to immolate ourselves at all times as a sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.—Tr.

horrible monsters which threatened to devour them. Trembling at every step, their hearts were seized with fear and dread, their souls were overwhelmed with sorrow, their spirits cast down by cruel perplexities. They imagined that they could never resist so many and so violent temptations ; but God, who is full of goodness and who watched carefully over these fervent souls, did not abandon them in this pressing necessity. They soon perceived that a youth more beautiful than the brilliant aurora that dissipates the shades of night, was coming to their assistance. He appeared to them to be (as indeed he really is) full of activity. This natural vivacity of his was moderated by great prudence, and ruled by the principles of wisdom.

According as this divine youth, who is called Holy Desire, approached, these two souls, still novices in the way of the Cross, felt within themselves the germs of consolation ; and their terrors were a little appeased. Upon meeting them, Holy Desire said, " How happy you are, my dear sisters, to be called by the Most High to walk in the footsteps of His Well-Beloved Son ! But what do I see ?" added he with astonishment, " do you regret your noble destiny ? I perceive upon your foreheads the clouds of sadness ; I see tears of sorrow flowing from your eyes ; you sigh. Alas ! will you be so

foolish as to refuse to follow the path trodden by your Crucified Saviour?"

These words covered Sophia and Eulalie with salutary confusion, and Sophia answered, "O cherished child of God! excuse my feebleness; my extreme cowardice and negligence make me so much dread the weight of the Cross. If you will assist me to overcome the vicious propensity which makes me love repose, I shall no longer listen to the voice of nature; but shall willingly follow you."

"Alas!" said Eulalie, "it is self-love which makes me fear suffering. Having been accustomed from my infancy to the sweetness which the Lord has poured into my soul as vivifying milk, I know nothing of His rigours. It is my inexperience which represents them to me as impracticable. But if, divine child, you will have the goodness to conduct me in this new career, I am resolved to follow you, and to do all that my Good Saviour requires of me."

Holy Desire, satisfied with their submission, laid his right hand upon their hearts, and immediately their fears were dissipated; a supernatural strength succeeded to their great timidity; they impatiently burned to run in the way that Jesus Christ hath Himself bedewed with His Precious Blood. They were so astonished at this marvel, that they could

not refrain from testifying to Holy Desire their gratitude for so great a favour. This Celestial Messenger, who, to the vivacity of youth, joined in an admirable manner all the prudence of an old man, took advantage of these happy dispositions to show them the virtue of sufferings.

“My dear sisters,” said he to them with charming sweetness, “remember that in this narrow way you must not seek your own satisfaction. You must desire, above all things, the accomplishment of the Will of God in your regard ; this Will should be yours also. If the Lord deprives you of sensible consolations, if He allows you to be afflicted with sadness, aridities, and other pains, you *must* submit to His orders without a murmur and without complaint ; this is the only way to please Him. I hope to be able to convince you of this truth now ; listen therefore to me.

“When the tenderest of Fathers, in drawing a soul to His service, carries her in His arms to spare her the fatigues of the journey, covers her with His wings to shelter her from the fiery darts of her cruel enemies, overwhelms her with inexpressible delights in order to make her forget and despise the false pleasures of the world, what merit has this soul ? What does it cost her to practise virtue ? She has, without doubt, no other sacri-

fice to offer to the Lord than that of gratitude. If this state was permanent, nature would be well satisfied, self-love would be nourished, and the soul treated in this manner, would scarcely do anything at all for God, who has done so much for her. But our amiable Saviour, who seeks only the true good of His children, does not act in this way. When He sees the soul firmly resolved to belong to Him alone, He withdraws little by little, that mysterious milk which made her formerly enjoy such perfect contentment. He gives her stronger nourishment in presenting to her the chalice of bitterness which He has first drunk Himself. Nature then groans with anguish ; but the docile soul does not listen to these complaints ; she even redoubles her efforts against these revolts of nature ; she ceases not to inflict mortal blows upon her enemy ; and with the help of Grace, she gains glorious victories over rebellious nature and self-love. What a source of merits is here open to the faithful soul ! She renders herself like to her Divine Redeemer ; she walks in His footsteps ; she becomes the object of His complacency ; every moment she adorns the crown of glory which is prepared for her.

“ Which of these two states, my dear sisters,” added Holy Desire, with a sweet smile, “ appears preferable to you at this moment ? ”

"The latter," they both eagerly answered ; "it is the latter which is worthy of our ambition. We were ignorant of our true advantages, when we were afflicted at having our share of sufferings ; but now we choose them, and we thank the Most High for having favoured us with them."

"Do not then be discouraged," answered Holy Desire ; "always advance in the service of the Lord ; never refuse Him anything that He asks of you ; never allow yourselves to be vanquished by temptations, however dangerous and violent, but with holy boldness break through the most insurmountable barriers. The God of hosts fights for you ; and with Him no enemy can overcome you. Never seek yourselves, but in everything consider the interests of your Sovereign Master ; never stop to examine (as cowardly and tepid Christians do) what is of obligation or what is not. Do not dispute with this greatest and most liberal of Kings, and never fear to do too much for Him : on the contrary, let your heart, smitten with lively and constant ardour, seek only the occasions of pleasing more and more, Him who has given Himself entirely to you. Suffer, therefore, with admirable patience and heroic fortitude, even the most horrible pains for Him, who for love of you hath delivered Himself up to a most shameful death."

As he concluded these words, he presented to them the image of Jesus Christ hanging on the Cross. With tender compassion he showed them all His wounds. He pointed out to them the bloody diadem which surrounded His angust and sacred Head. He took from this Crown two thorns, which he gave them as a seal of the alliance which this Divine Spouse desired to contract with them. Sophia, at this touching spectacle, could no longer contain herself. Her soul was deeply moved. She prostrated herself to receive with respect this adorable thorn. She regarded it (and with reason) as an inestimable gift. Eulalie, with transports of love, kissed hers ; she pressed it to her heart with most ardent affection. She gathered and preserved with the greatest care the Precious Blood with which it was covered. In the warmth of her fervour she cried out—

“ O Sacred thorn, you have wounded my Well-Beloved ! It is upon Him that you have exhausted your rigours. The sufferings that I endure cannot be compared to the anguish you have caused my Master, my Father, and my Saviour. O my dear Spouse, the delight of my heart ! When shall I give to you proofs of my love, in gratitude for the infinite extent of yours ? O my One, my Only Treasure, impart to me some portion of that im-

mense charity with which you burn ; let it enkindle the insensibility of my soul, and let it aid me to run with speed and eagerness in the rugged paths through which you are pleased to call me."

While Eulalie was thus expressing the sentiments of her tenderness, Sophia attentively considered the rich present which Holy Desire, in the name of His Amiable Redeemer, had just given her. In her amorous contemplation, she cried out from time to time—

"Can I dare complain of suffering, when I behold the terrible torments of my Saviour ! O Charitable Pastor, Thou art innocence and sanctity itself, and I, alas ! am only sin and misery. Thou hast died to give me life ! Thou hast expired on an infamous gibbet, in order to expiate my crimes ! Thou alone didst suffer the chastisement which should have fallen on me. Ah ! how just therefore it is, that in gratitude for so many benefits, I should embrace the Cross and carry it after Thee."

"O my only Good !" exclaimed again the young Eulalie, "if I cannot return Thee blood for blood, life for life, at least warm my cold heart, penetrate it with Thy flames, in order that I may return Thee love for love."

These two loving companions were heard. They saw coming forth from the Sacred Heart of Jesus

brilliant sparks, which reposed upon their breasts, and which enkindled in their souls the beautiful fire of Charity. They immediately felt its lively impressions ; an inexplicable sweetness ravished their whole being, their fears were calmed, their languor disappeared, and they were animated with a supernatural strength. This celestial fire by degrees altogether stifled in their hearts the voice of nature ; it banished that vain delicacy, all love of self and that aversion for crosses and mortifications. In a word, Divine Love directed their intentions, purified their affections, ruled their desires, and sanctified their actions. These two timid companions were marvellously changed into two fervent lovers of Calvary. Very far from dreading sufferings, they found in them the greatest charms. For this reason they pursued with fresh ardour the laborious way which was pointed out to them. The more painful their journey became, the more was their courage fortified. The thorns and briars with which it was strewn had become agreeable flowers, and the darkness with which it was sometimes covered could not obscure the lights which shone in their souls. Insensible to the labours which fatigued their delicate bodies, they attended only to the ineffable goods which were bestowed upon their souls. They knew by their own ex-

perience how sweet it is to suffer for the God whom they loved and adored. They thanked their Sovereign Master that He treated them as His dearest favourites. Sophia cried out a thousand times, "Blessed for ever be the Lord who teacheth me to fight. No, my Saviour, I will never depart from you, nor fly from your Cross ; I will never again ask you to deliver me from pains and labours. Give me Thy Love, clothe me with strength, give me constancy, in order that I may persevere until the end of my life nailed to Thy Cross."

"O most Perfect Spouse !" exclaimed the young Eulalie, "never allow the sacred fire which you have just enkindled in my heart to be extinguished ; on the contrary, grant that its activity may increase every moment ; grant that this heart may be so penetrated and consumed with this fire, that with every breath I may send up to Thee, my Divine Lover, inflamed arrows of love. O my sweet Jesus, may my last sigh be a sigh of love, and in this manner grant that I may at the last give my soul into Thy adorable hands."

Animated with these noble sentiments, and conducted by Holy Desire, these blessed souls made great progress without perceiving it. At length they arrived to the end of this crucifying way, that is to say their journey became easier, and they had

not so many difficulties to encounter. The Lord, pleased at the manner in which they had endured their first trials, wished to recompense their efforts. He therefore dissipated all the temptations which had so much afflicted them, and procured them purer consolations and more solid pleasures.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOLY DESIRE CONDUCTS SOPHIA AND EULALIE TO
THE RETREAT OF FERVOUR.

THE two pious companions delighted to behold the celestial lights once more shining upon them, rejoiced in the Lord, and gave thanks to Him. As they were running swiftly in the Way of Salvation, Holy Desire stopped them, and told them to notice the touching and instructive sentences which were written upon the sand and also upon the bark of the trees. The first that he showed to them were these : "O hearts created to love, and who cannot live without loving, do not dishonour this noble faculty of your soul by wasting it upon the creature. Your God urges you to love Him, yield to His loving invitations ; He alone is worthy of your love ; He alone can satisfy the immensity of your desires." A little

farther on Holy Desire again invited His new disciples to reflect upon the following words : " Let us love God, let us love Him more and more ; we can never love Him as much as He deserves ; our love for this Divine Object will never equal that which He has for us. Let this sweet fire of Charity multiply in our souls for ages of ages, even so, it will never be anything but one feeble spark of that ardent furnace of love, which burns in the Heart of my Saviour."

These young disciples could not fix their eyes on these inflamed characters without shedding an abundance of tears. They confessed to Holy Desire the regret they felt for having so little loved the All Perfect God who merits all our love. This wise guide, in order to augment their zeal, read to them these pressing solicitations which were engraven on the bark of a large tree : " All you who are the work of the most High, and made after His image, run to Love, embrace Love, attach yourselves to Love, allow yourselves to be wounded by Love, immolate yourselves to Love, unite yourselves for ever to Love, who is God Himself. This Love has taken away my heart to give it to my dear Spouse. Let this Love take your heart to consecrate it to this tender Father. Oh ! how great will be your happiness when you live only

for Holy Love, and are entirely transformed in Him ! Let us love, let us love Him whom the Seraphim never tire of loving : let us love Him without bounds, without measure, and without limit."

Eulalie was in raptures with this divine language ; she desired to have a million hearts, to give them all to the flames of Sacred Love. Sophia ardently desired to know the person who had thus given to the world the expression of her sentiments. " This beautiful soul," said she, " must superabound with love, since she has taken pleasure in thus pouring forth some drops of that delicious torrent with which she is inundated."

The two companions asked their guide to be pleased to allow them to see this fervent Lover of the Saviour. Holy Desire promised them to do so, and said to them : " Listen attentively to the sweet sounds which will presently greet your ears." They obeyed, and at the same moment they heard tender sighs which were sent forth towards the Palace of True Happiness, by a heart wounded with love. A few moments afterwards, they distinguished the voice of a person not far distant. They approached quietly and softly, and very soon words more precious than gold and costly jewels riveted their attention, and touched them in a marvellous manner.

"O my Love," cried out this voice, which was so melodious as to be capable of softening the hardest rocks; "O my Love, O delight of my soul, how sweet is thy Love! Oh! how charming are the wounds of Love! How light His chains! how sweet His yoke! My Well-Beloved, how admirable are Thy favours! Why am I so faint and feeble in corresponding to them?" Then profound and amorous sighs stopped this melodious voice. How eloquent was that silence! how energetic! How strongly it cried to the Perfect Object who occasioned it! In a moment after this seraphic soul spoke again, and expressed in a pathetic tone her amorous languishings: "O God full of goodness," said she in ecstatic transports; "Oh ravishing beauty! he who loves Thee not, knows Thee not; for how can anyone know Thee and not love Thee? O Compassionate Father whose benefits are despised, Thou lovest all men with an infinite love, and they repay this love with monstrous ingratitude! Oh, my Well-Beloved, since these foolish mortals will not receive the least spark of this divine fire, deign to pour into my heart the different measures of love which you have destined for these ungrateful ones, in order that I may love you as much as all these foolish ones would have been able to love you!"

She stopped for some moments to give free course to her tears ; then she continued again : " God always loves, God unceasingly loves, God loves infinitely, and yet few will love Him in return ! Oh furnace of love, ever burning, and which is never extinguished, if Thou would'st consume all hearts, Thou would'st give some solace to my pain. But alas ! Thy sacred flames make no impression on hearts which are harder than stone. O sea, which art increased by the tears I shed, imitate with the noise of thy waves, my groans and my complaints ! O brilliant Sun ! which every day gildeth with thy rays my little hermitage ; when finishing your course, give to my Spouse my canticles of love ! O ye little birds who delight my ears with your charming songs ; cease not to tell Him with your sweet voices that I love Him, and that I will love Him every day and every moment of my life ! "

These fervent words filled Sophia and Eulalie with joy. They redoubled their requests to Holy Desire to make known to them this angelic creature. Above all, Eulalie made the most pressing solicitations. At length this celestial messenger acceded to their wishes ; he conducted them near a thick grove which nature had formed, and which it had taken pleasure in adorning with abundant foliage to render it more solitary.

These faithful companions believed they were in the midst of Thebais. They expected to find some solitary hermit in his cave; but what was their surprise, when on entering into the grotto from which the melodious voice had proceeded, they perceived a young woman of surpassing beauty. A beautiful vermilion enhanced the loveliness of her fair complexion; her eyes were animated with a chaste and moderated fire; a modest gaiety appeared in her whole countenance. She had two wings of transparent azure tipped with silver. She held in her hand the sacred sign of our Redemption, and lovingly kissed this adorable image. They saw departing from her heart living sparks of love, which ascended even to Heaven. Her Divine Spouse received with complacency these expressions of her tenderness. To assure her of His love, He sent back again the purest flames, which gave her a rapture so excessive, that she appeared out of herself. She held her mouth fixed upon the Saviour's open side, and through this sacred wound her soul entirely melted away in the Heart of her Well-Beloved. She was so deeply plunged and lost in the immensity of the Divine mercies, that she did not perceive the new guests who had just entered her retreat.

Holy Desire interrupted her in her ecstasy, and

in her heart. This privileged soul was always dear to me ; I have never quitted her. The trials which she has lately passed through are the only ones in which she has not felt my presence in a visible manner. Until that time, through my good offices, she had always experienced inexpressible contentment and incredible ardour in the service of her Sovereign Master. Those who resemble her, cherish me and give me a good reception ; but, alas ! how many there are who quickly abandon me and fly from me ! Ah ! how few remain always faithful to me !”

“ I,” answered Eulalie with simplicity, “ I will be of the number of these constant friends ; I will always follow you, O divine Fervour ; never will I forget your past benefits, but will always endeavour to merit them more and more.”

Fervour rewarded this protestation with a thousand caresses. She wished also to reward in a similar manner Sophia, whose regrets for her past worldly life obliged her to keep silence. To excite her desires, she fell again into an excess of sadness, and cried out in an emphatic tone : “ O precious days of the Early Church, what has become of you ? My kingdom was then flourishing ; none were happy without me ; all rendered homage to me. Those first Christians had only one heart

and one soul, which I led and turned at my pleasure. But this rich time, in which I gathered such an abundant harvest, is passed. Happy age, shall I never see you more?"

"Ah!" answered Sophia quickly, "Ah! lovely Fervour, deign to bestow upon me, as upon these first Christians, those noble sentiments which have God alone for their object, their beginning, and their end. Behold my heart, enkindle in it the sacred fire which consumes yours, and be pleased to conduct me yourself in the Way of the Cross."

Fervour, pleased with the resolution of Sophia, tenderly embraced her, and immediately caused to pass into her soul the movements and affections of her own. Then, quitting her solitude, she joined herself to Holy Desire, and together they accompanied her new Disciples. She unfolded her wings, and taking them in her arms, she carried them in an instant over immense forests and vast deserts. The most rugged rocks and the highest mountains seemed to give way before her so as to make her passage free and easy. Sophia and Eulalie were overwhelmed with joy. They tasted in long draughts the solid pleasures which the presence of Fervour and Holy Desire procures.

CHAPTER XV.

VIGILANCE COMES TO SUCCOUR AND STRENGTHEN
SOPHIA AND EULALIE AGAINST THE RAGE AND
FURY OF ALL THE VICES.



WHILE Sophia and Eulalie were innocently rejoicing to be in the company of Fervour and Holy Desire, they saw a Lady of rarest beauty approaching. She came up to them with noble majesty : she walked moderately quick, but without any precipitation. Prudence and Reserve guided all her actions. She was clothed with offensive and defensive armour, which she wisely used to repulse and vanquish her enemies. Her body was covered with the impenetrable breast-plate of Justice ; her head was adorned with the helmet of Hope. In her left hand she held the shield of Faith ; and in her right hand the formidable lance of Fortitude. She never relinquished her mysterious armour ; she was always ready to combat ; she never slept for fear of being surprised. Such, and a thousand times still more admirable was the wise Vigilance whom God in His mercy sent to His privileged souls. This amiable Lady, as she approached them, pronounced this Oracle of the Divine Legislator ; “ Watch and

“pray, lest you enter into temptation : the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matt. xxvi. 41.)

Fervour having told Sophia and Eulalie the name of this venerable person, they saluted her with the most profound respect. Vigilance favourably received their homage, and manifested the most tender affection for Holy Desire and Fervour. The latter responded to it by assurances of the most perfect esteem.

Then Vigilance declared to Sophia and Eulalie the reason for which she had come to them. She assured them that she had come to tell them of the prodigies of God’s goodness to them, and immediately she began to speak to them in this manner : “ Know, my dear children, that from the Sublime Throne where God manifests His glory to His elect, He always casts upon you looks of predilection. He regarded with complacence the care which Sophia, after her conversion, took to please Him. He was pleased with the efforts she made to oppose herself to the ardour of her passions. He witnessed her first combats, and sustained her by His marvellous assistance. It was through Him that she was victorious over the vain attractions of a seducing world. As for the young Eulalie, this beneficent God has never ceased to carry her in His arms, to cover her with His wings, and to

preserve her as the apple of His eye. By a singular favour, mortal sin has never entered into her soul, nor corrupted her heart. Happy daughters of the best of Fathers, recognise therefore *all* your happiness! The love of your God is not limited to these marks of a particular protection. He sees all your enemies gathered together ready to burst upon you. It is His will that you should be forewarned of their designs, lest you should be surprised and should succumb under the weight of their blows. It is to complete His work in you that He has sent to me one of those Celestial Intelligences who are His Ambassadors. This blessed spirit said to me: 'Behold what the Most High has ordained me to declare to you. Cast your eyes upon that valley of tears and miseries, and take notice of those two young souls who march on without ever stopping in that narrow and difficult way. Your heart doubtless yearns to assist them and you desire to succour them; this is also the Will of the Lord. Your desires shall be speedily accomplished: for, listen to the words of the living God. . . . I have spoken to them, and they have heard my voice: I have called them, and they have answered me. Docile to my solicitations, they have bent their necks to the sweet yoke of my law; their fidelity shall not be unrewarded, I

will give them efficacious means to work out their salvation : I will send them sure and instructed guides, who shall always show them the true Way which conducts to the Palace of the most solid and True Happiness. Under their wise direction, and by the strength of my arm, they shall vanquish all the Powers of Hell, how furiously soever they may rage, against them.' The blessed spirit, after having declared to me these words of the Most High, then said to me : 'Thou, O Amiable Virtue, art one of these Guides whose duty it is to protect those souls whom God cherishes in quite a particular manner. They are going to be confided to your care : they will speedily march under your direction, and will find in you a powerful protectress. But in order that you may know all the perils with which they are threatened, I will now make known to you the multitude of enemies who are going to declare war against them.'

"Then this Sublime Intelligence gave to me a resplendent ray of light which the Eternal Wisdom had confided to him. By means of this light, my eyes having become more lively and piercing, perceived without difficulty the most hidden objects. I fixed my gaze upon this land of exile, in which mortals pass their sorrowful life. Afterwards, penetrating further, I discovered a deep and obscure

cavern, into which the light of day never penetrates. In this horrible retreat, I saw all the Vices united together for the hateful purpose of causing the loss and ruin of all men. The vaults of this sombre dwelling resounded with their furious cries; and in the midst of their tumultuous clamours I distinctly heard your names pronounced. Each and all of them gloried in having heretofore held Sophia under their empire, and they boasted that they would soon conquer the young Eulalie."

At these words Sophia, being mindful of her former wanderings, commenced to pour forth a torrent of tears: Eulalie could not refrain from trembling at the sight of her own feebleness, and the aspect of so many formidable enemies; but Holy Desire and Fervour consoled them both, and reassured them. "Remember," they said to them, "that the Almighty is your support. With Him you are stronger than all the Infernal Powers."

Vigilance, seeing their terror dissipated, continued to instruct them, and arm them against their approaching combats. "Pride," she said to them, cried out violently: "'Tis to me that belongs the right of advancing first against these rash young souls who pretend to brave me. What! while all mortals bend the knee before me, shall I behold with tranquil eye young girls in the flower

of their age, resist my laws, and scorn my efforts ! No, no, it shall not be so : I will go to meet them, and will softly insinuate myself in their souls. When I shall have made myself master of their hearts and their wills, I will enter into all their designs ; I will conduct them in all their actions ; I will dictate their words and thoughts ; they will soon learn all my lessons, and I shall become their only conductor. I will bind them with chains so strong that it will be impossible for them to break them."

"What say you?" replied Envy ; "is it not to me, my dear friends, that you should grant the honour of running first to defeat these rebellious children ? You all know my ability and strength ; you know with what advantage I use the arms which the Prince of Darkness has confided to me ; you see each day how many hearts my arrows pierce, and how deadly are the wounds I give. Ordain, therefore, that I depart without delay ; I am certain to bring them speedily back chained to my chariot as slaves, in such a manner that they can never escape."

"No," answered Anger, with a voice trembling with rage and fury ; "none of us must march alone to an action of so great importance : the glory of vanquishing these young mad fools belongs to *all*

the citizens of this black Empire. Let us unite all our strength ; let us march in unison ; let us burst upon them all together ; they cannot hold out against so many darts thrown at them from every side. We shall soon have the gratified pleasure of seeing them fall beneath the weight of our blows, and come trembling to us to beg pardon ; yea, and they will bend their necks to the yoke that we will impose upon them ; they will yield in all things to our will."

Eulalie, being unable to contain the sentiment of fear with which she was seized, cried out with amiable and child-like simplicity : " My God, what will become of us, if they follow this pernicious counsel ? Alas ! O Lord, alas ! O do not abandon us !"

" Do not fear, my little friend," answered Fer-vour, embracing her ; " God will be always with you, and He Himself will fight for you. Do you not ardently wish to march under His standard ?"

" Take courage," said Holy Desire, " and never forget that we must labour and suffer much for the God we love."

These words reassured the young and timid Eulalie. She even begged Vigilance to finish the relation of the wicked plot which the Vices had formed against them. This venerable Lady did so with pleasure.

"Anger," continued she, "was still speaking, when Falsehood arose and said in a moderate and insinuating tone: "I praise the zeal of Pride. Envy, and Anger; but they will, I know, permit me to respectfully represent to them that it is to be feared that if we attack those companions openly, we shall not succeed in the accomplishment of our design. The reason of this appears to me evident. These young persons, seeing at a glance so many terrible adversaries, will not fail to fear their own weakness and feebleness. They will consequently cast themselves promptly into the arms of Him who is with them, and who fights for them. Then this God of Hosts, whom none can resist, will take their interests in hand, and will infallibly give them the victory. We shall be obliged to fly with confusion on our countenances, and with despair in our hearts. O how horrible is this thought to me! There is nothing that I will not do to spare myself this shame. But," added he, "listen. I know a well-combined plan, which will be advantageous to us, and will certainly be fatal to these poor fools. Let us not foolishly be jealous of each other. It is a common cause. Let us take together the wisest measures to ensure success. What does it matter through whom these young persons are submitted to our dominion: the essential thing is to succeed.

Let us therefore understand each other. Hear then in two words my advice, which I have seriously meditated upon, and which I submit to your lights. Let those amongst us who have most sympathy with their age, their inclinations, and, above all (mark it well) above all, with the state they have embraced; let these, I say, present themselves before them, one after the other, with a gracious air; let them discreetly employ flattery, caresses, the most brilliant promises, and all the ruses we are so ingenious in inventing; let them tend their snares as imperceptibly as possible; let them bring about the most critical and delicate occasions; let them place them in the most slippery places, and let their whole exterior be covered with flowers. Seduced by these deceitful appearances, it is impossible for them not to fall. One abyss will draw them into another. By imposing little burdens upon their consciences, they will accustom themselves to carry all the weight of iniquity. Their Master, so jealous of their perfection, will be indignant at their multiplied infidelities, and will abandon them to themselves. Then is the time for us; then shall we easily conquer, and how great will be our gratification. They will find themselves caught in our snares without perceiving it. We shall experience the greatest joy at having partici-

pated in their defeat. And although they may triumph over the first of us, nevertheless, let not those who follow be discouraged. We must expect some resistance at first ; but they will soon yield to assaults so well managed, and to snares so well laid. Those who strike the first blows will prepare the victory for those who are to follow, and all will return gloriously crowned with the laurels of victory."

As soon as Falsehood had concluded his speech, they all applauded his design. They all manifested great eagerness, or rather extreme fury, to execute this diabolical plan.

"O my good Jesus," cried out Eulalie, "O my Well-Beloved, save us, for without you we shall perish."

"I confess," said Sophia, "that this project disquiets me, and shakes my courage ; I tremble lest I should allow myself to be seduced by one of these vices, and become unfaithful to my God. O amiable Fervour ! O Holy Desire ! O prudent Vigilance, what great need have we of your assistance to repel so many envenomed darts, and to avoid so many snares ; do not refuse it to us, take compassion on our feebleness and weakness, and remain always with us."

"Your salvation," answered Fervour, "is infinitely

dear to me ; I will sacrifice all to obtain it. Be therefore well persuaded that I will always be with you and your young companion. I will be most attentive to keep alive in your hearts a sweet flame, which will assist you to support your pains with joy, and which will communicate to you an ardent zeal for the service of the Lord."

"As for me," said Holy Desire, "I will never leave you. God has sent me to you to accompany you all the days of your life. I will never cease to raise your hearts and affections to Him, and to inspire you to undertake the most perfect works, and to perform them in the most perfect manner. By promptly corresponding to my cares, you will disconcert all the measures of your furious Adversaries, and will also merit to be the worthy objects of the complacency of your Heavenly Father."

"Rest assured, my tender children," said Vigilance, "I will be always near to assist you. Remember that I shall be close to you, although you perceive it not. I will guide your steps in the most pressing dangers. I will teach you how to resist with intrepid courage. Sometimes I will cause you to fly, at other times I will instruct you how to combat, and will always assist you to vanquish and triumph. To prove to you my good

will, I will at once make known to you those among the Vices who have determined to pursue you immediately, and the manner in which they will endeavour to surprise you. For this, it will be sufficient for me to relate to you their discourse, just as the Angel of the Lord has given me the facility of hearing it. As soon as the design of Falsehood was approved, all the Vices took counsel upon the manner in which it should be executed.

“It was decided that Voluptuousness should be the first to meet you in the way. This impudent woman, proud of the preference which they had given to her, promised to perform prodigies of valour in this war, in which she had the honour of marching first. ‘Yes,’ said she, ‘I will seek them out; I will dazzle their eyes with all my attractions. I will flatter them by fine and delicate praises. I will cause them to be respected and adored by my confidants. I will crown them with most beautiful flowers. I will attach them to me by my playful airs and most brilliant entertainments. I myself will conduct them into the most seducing places of my palace, and will present to them in a cup enriched with precious stones the subtle poison which my hands have prepared for the most insensible hearts. They will no sooner have tasted this enchanting liquor, than its sopor-

rific odour will stupify them. All the vivacity of their zeal will vanish; the strength of their souls will be diminished, and they will fall fainting into my arms. Then I will speedily impose my bonds upon them, those charming bonds which they will never be able to break.'

"After this cruel enemy of the human race had concluded, Negligence spoke. 'If these young girls,' said she, 'resist the charms of the amiable Voluptuousness, I will go to meet them. I will relax their ardour: I will stop them in the midst of their course: I will persuade them to take some repose. As soon as ever they shall have consented to follow me one step, I will oppress their limbs with a weight which shall seem to them insurmountable. I will cause in their souls an overwhelming languor. Then they will have nothing but coldness and indifference for the Master, who until then appeared to them so liberal. They will all at once quit those burdensome exercises to which they are now so foolishly attached. They will then in company with me seek after conveniences and commodities, and I shall profit of this to open their hearts to all the marvellous enchantments of my dear Brethren and Sisters.'

"Hypocrisy, with his composed air and affected manners, commenced by saluting the whole com-

pany, and said : ' I do not believe that young girls scarcely yet out of their infancy, will triumph over Voluptuousness and Negligence ; but, if this misfortune should happen, I am persuaded they will be forced to yield to my pious artifices. I will borrow an austere and modest exterior ; I will cover myself with a mask of devotion ; I will appear before them under the veil of an imposing recollection ; I will speak to them only of the most sublime virtues, penances, mortifications and prayers. I am sure to play my part so well that they will take me for the most perfect of creatures. Then they will look upon me with admiration ; they will listen to me as an oracle ; they will blindly follow me, will choose me for their most intimate friend, and I shall lead them where I please. I will teach them to adorn themselves with every appearance of sanctity, and will make them act a comedy during all their lives. After having shewn them to the eyes of the spectators, as rich and powerful in merits, they will behold them at the end of the scene, with empty hands and void of good works.'

" ' With all these arts,' answered Self Will to Hypocrisy, ' I am afraid you will allow this precious treasure to escape. For me, my empire over all hearts is so great, and they are naturally

so much inclined to obey me, that I am sure to make myself mistress of these children, as soon as I appear before them. I will boast much of the sweetness of liberty, and will deliver a pompous discourse on the glory of independence. I will paint so hideous a portrait of constraint and submission that they will be seized with horror : I will make the chains of obedience so heavy and insupportable that they will think only of casting them off. They will soon despise all laws ; yea, and reject all counsels. They will fly from the severe guides who trace out for them such an impracticable way, and will run to my arms ; they will look upon me as their queen, and I shall sovereignly reign in their souls. Then I will unloose the bridle which checks their passions and desires. Having no longer any restraint upon them, they will come of their own accord, my dear friends, to offer you their incense and homage. Oh how delightful to you will be the odour of these perfumes !

“ ‘As for me,’ said Error, inflated with audacious pride ; ‘I look higher than this. I cannot endure so many artifices : I desire to overwhelm them at once with my terrible blows. First I will make them doubt the truths in which they have believed from infancy ; then I will shake their

faith to its very foundations. I will extinguish its flame and dazzle their eyes with the brilliant light of the torch I bear in my hands. As soon as they commence to believe in me, I will make them despise and detest their true Mother, and I will nourish them in my bosom, I will give them an antidote against all the ravings of their cruel step-mother.'

"Error was still congratulating herself on the supposed success of her terrible project, when Vanity, more sweet in appearance, imparted to her unworthy colleagues the shameful design which she had conceived in her heart. 'I fear,' said she, 'that these young girls, fortified with so many arms, will receive no harm from the arrows you intend to shoot at them ; but I cannot imagine that they will long resist my charms. I have made a rich and ample provision of all the ornaments suitable to enhance a rising beauty : I have some which will moderate the too lively colours which appear upon their countenances, and which will make their fair complexion show to greater advantage : I have all kinds of fashions which will add new charms to those of youth which are just budding forth. I will appear to these young charming creatures upon whom nature, so liberal in their regard, has bestowed her most precious gifts, I will

appear to them, I say, decked in most brilliant apparel ; they will find me so agreeable, so charming, so amiable, that they will soon imitate me ; then I will furnish them abundantly with everything that can cause them to be admired. I will teach them the rare art of pleasing and making to themselves faithful adorers. The moment they commence to follow my lessons, let rigid Innocence, to whom they are at present so much attached, begin to tremble and regard them with chagrin and ill-humour ; they themselves will quickly force her to depart from them, and leave them to enjoy in peace the pleasures which they will taste with me. All their thoughts will be taken up with contenting their desires and inclinations, and their time will be spent in going from spectacle to spectacle. It is then that beautiful Voluptuousness, the dearest of my friends, will at her pleasure mould like melted wax, these tender hearts.'

"So far, Self-Love had kept silence, and it had cost him something to do so. But at last he made amends for it, and lifted up his voice against you. 'My brethren and Sisters,' said he, 'I wish to draw advantage from all your attacks ; all your labours will prepare my triumph. I think that this weak sex sustained by an All-Powerful arm, will be victorious over all your efforts. Ashamed of your

defeats you will have recourse to me: you will solicit me to come to your assistance and to repair the injuries you have received. I will, my dear compatriots, yield to your desires, and behold how I will do so. I am going to adopt quite a different plan to yours. I shall make use of the very courage with which they have resisted you, to attack and vanquish them. It is with their own strength that I shall enfeeble them. I will mix in the gold of their virtue, a dross which shall corrupt all its purity. I will imperceptibly insinuate myself into their souls; I will carefully hide from them their misery, their nothingness, their defects; I will make them see only their combats, their conquests and their sacrifices. I will endeavour to persuade them that even now in the spring-time of their age, they have arrived to the highest degree of sanctity. I will urge them on to perform those actions which will make them shine before men, and will draw upon them the applause of others;—at the same time, I will nourish in them a secret and vain complacency. Through these spiritual mists and obscurities, these young girls born for the glory of this world, will look no farther; they will occupy themselves only with practices which will cause them to be admired, esteemed, and sought after: they will attribute to themselves, the good which

they do only by the help of God : they will flatter themselves upon their devotion, their zeal, their constancy and their victories. Proud of this first success, I will craftily glide into the most impenetrable interior of their hearts ; there I will establish my throne ; there will I dwell, and there I will employ all my admirable artifices. I will allow them to enjoy in peace the honourable right of piety, and will conduct them to the point of offering to the Lord nothing but dead works of which He shall neither be the author nor the end. How great will be their surprise when they shall appear before their inexorable Judge having no oil in their lamps ? ”

Sophia and Eulalie could not refrain from trembling. “ O my God,” they cried out, “ how perfidious and crafty is this enemy ! Deliver us, O Lord from his snares ! ”

Vigilance calmed their just terror, and promised to cover them with her shield. “ Listen to me, now my dear children, the last words of the celestial Messenger will fill you with consolation. ‘ You have just heard,’ he said to me, ‘ the detestable plots that Hell forms against these young servants of my Sovereign Master ; delay not to run to their assistance ; warn them of the perils which threaten them, take your arms

to defend them, and remain constantly with them !’

“ He spoke, and immediately the sacred ethereal vaults opened to receive him. I saw him at the feet of the Eternal, rendering to Him an account of his embassy. For myself, not being able to contain the transports of my zeal, I departed quickly, and came to assist you and employ the strength and vigour with which the Almighty has endowed my arm. You are now forewarned of what is to happen ; therefore be ready to meet your enemies who will succeed each other and declare an implacable war. Let not their approach cause you to lose courage. Hope in God ; place all your confidence in Him, and He will sustain you ; if you do not fail to combat, the Most High will never fail to give you the victory.”

“ How happy are you, my dear friends !” said Fervour with her ordinary vivacity ; “ you are now going to prove to the Lord in a generous manner, that you really love Him, that you are willing to undertake anything and sacrifice anything for His glory. Walk in the way which your Divine Spouse has watered with His Precious Blood ; be worthy imitators and lovers of your Crucified Saviour.”

“ Aspire,” said Holy Desire to them ; “ aspire

to the solid happiness of being His well beloved children, and do great things to please Him. Elevate your thoughts and unite your wills to this Supreme Being ; ardently desire to arrive to the highest perfection, and tend to it with all your strength." Then Vigilance clothed them with her armour. Fervour embraced them and communicated to them a sweet and penetrating flame which animated and fortified them. Holy Desire made them participators of his activity and courage. These three Virtues promised to be always near them in the midst of their combats, and then disappeared from sight.

Sophia and Eulalie, confiding in the words of their powerful guides and putting all their confidence in the Lord, had become like to generous soldiers who at the sight of the enemy become more brave and full of courage. They sighed for the moment in which they could fight for the honour of their Divine Spouse. They did not have to wait long, but soon found an occasion of satisfying their desires.

CHAPTER XVI.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE ARRIVE NEAR THE DWELL-
ING OF VOLUPTUOUSNESS.



SARCELY had Sophia and Eulalie commenced to walk alone, than they saw before them a vast and beautiful country. The rising of the Aurora spreading a soft sweet light upon the verdure and flowers, presented a most lovely spectacle. Sophia and Eulalie while admiring the marvels of nature, lifted up their hearts to its Author. They travelled on, making useful reflections upon the goodness of God, until they came at length to an eminence overlooking a charming valley,—where they obtained the most beautiful view that can be imagined. From the height where these young persons were standing, they could behold the whole extent of this enchanting scene, and could perceive everything that passed. They beheld most lovely flowers artistically arranged in beds, the borders of which were adorned with odoriferous plants ; beautiful meadows kept with greatest care : superb cascades, which with the musical fall of their crystalline waters, delighted both the eye and the ear. In the midst of all this beauty, where art seemed to have exhausted its

riches, they were surprised to see a magnificent pavilion, supported only by four pillars, adorned with garlands and wreaths of every fashion. Under this pavilion, on the top of fifteen steps, was placed a throne covered with gold and precious stones. Upon this throne was seated a woman who was clothed in the most licentious manner, and whose apparel was of the most studied elegance. An infinite number of persons of every age, sex and condition bent the knee before this Idol of flesh. Sophia could not refrain her tears at the sight of the deplorable blindness of these foolish creatures, And she cried out : " Let us fly, my dear companion, let us fly ; this is the dwelling of the infamous Voluptuousness ; it is only by flight that we can save ourselves and conquer." " You are right," answered Eulalie ; " this is not the way which leads to the Palace of True Happiness ; this is not the way which Counsel, that worthy minister of the Most High, has taught us."

Both were retracing their steps when a venerable lady, in the midst of a luminous cloud, appeared to them. Sophia recognised her, and cast herself at her feet. " O adorable Grace," she said to her, " you who have with so much prodigality poured so many benefits upon us, have now come to succour us in the great peril which threatens us."

"Dear objects of my tender solicitude," gravely answered Grace, "I am pleased with your holy resolution. Always continue to co-operate faithfully with my favours; and I will never cease to pour them abundantly upon you. The resolution you took of departing from this poisonous atmosphere was very wise. You must never expose yourselves to the danger of losing your innocence. Nevertheless, for the instruction of Eulalie, and to inspire her with a lively horror of this place, I permit you to remain here for a few moments, under my guidance. You, my dear Sophia, who by sad experience know all these persons, teach your friend to diffide in them, and never for one moment to listen to them."

As Grace uttered these words, a thick cloud covered her, and veiled her from sight. These fervent companions, being fortified with this supernatural assistance, again gazed upon this abominable valley; but they did so with the utmost precaution.

Sophia requested Eulalie to remark that Voluptuousness was always accompanied by two women who are not less to be feared than their Queen. "The first," said she, "is Softness, this one is her most intimate friend. She it is who sustains her steps, and regulates all her proceed-

ings. Softness also is her adviser, and rules all her desires. The second is Sensuality. This one never leaves her; she prepares her food, she arranges her attire. Her whole study is to invent new pleasures which may satisfy the corrupted heart of her mistress."

"O what a criminal! O what a horrible occupation!" cried out young Eulalie, with admirable simplicity. "How much I pity you, my dear friend, for having so well known these detestable persons!"

"How happy you are, my sister," answered Sophia, "to have been always preserved from these rocks, where even the most tried virtue sometimes suffers shipwreck! Look again," she continued, "at that woman, who gives herself so many airs. She is a most dangerous person. Her name is Seduction. It is impossible to understand the terrible ravages this wicked woman commits. She runs unceasingly to and fro, seeking Disciples for Voluptuousness. She succeeds in obtaining them only too frequently; for alas! how many run to meet her, and voluntarily present their hands to the heavy chains with which she desires to fetter them."

The two pious companions, under the secure protection of Grace, saw with extreme grief that

Seduction stopped all those who pass near the dwelling of that Queen of the passions, Voluptuousness. They noticed that of all this woman stopped, she attached herself in a singular manner to the young people of both sexes, whom she solicited with furious obstinacy, and left them not until they had consented to her pernicious desires. She employed a thousand snares, a thousand arts to vanquish their resistance, and she frequently by her feigned caresses, triumphed over those whom she could not dazzle by her false promises.

"See," said Sophia to Eulalie, "how she conducts into those enchanted groves all those who yield to her enticements. In the first of these groves, she furnishes them with books composed by slaves of Satan, who are in the service of Voluptuousness. No sooner do they read these dreadful books, than they are wounded with a mortal blow which corrupts the spirit and the heart. Then, Seduction, delighted to see her work advancing so well, causes her pupils to enter into the second grove. This has several divisions, which are filled with pictures, prints, and statues, calculated to enkindle the fires of concupiscence. In the third grove they are provided with concerts, the music of which is so soft, tender, and passionate, that it speaks to the heart the language of

although the avenging God was upon the point of depriving him of life, yet nevertheless was thinking only of committing the most abominable crimes.

But still more desolating objects met their gaze, and afflicted their hearts. They discovered in the distance young girls, in the flower of their age, who were being forcibly dragged to this place of enchantment. Cruel fathers without faith, mothers without religion and without morals, either through their own bad example, or through their negligence, or sometimes, alas ! by employing their authority, obliged these young girls to live under the tyrannical laws of Voluptuousness and Softness. By a barbarism, which is, alas ! not altogether unknown, these inhuman parents forced their children to bend the knee before this imperious idol. They themselves loaded their own offspring with irons, which assured their bondage, and this in some cases even in spite of their tears and entreaties. Then Seduction, with her ordinary arms, approached these unfortunate creatures. She eagerly wiped away their tears, embraced them with insidious affection, gave them a thousand perfidious caresses, and promised them pleasures, amusements, respect, and adoration.

Sophia and Eulalie were in the greatest affliction. They were inconsolable at the sight of the misera-

ble destiny of these amiable children ; they lifted up their pure hands to the Almighty, to obtain from Him assistance for these unfortunate beings ; they offered Him their sighs ; they addressed to Him fervent prayers ; they ceased not to implore His aid, and at length He heard them. A huge piece of rock was suddenly detached from the hill upon which they were standing, and crushed several of these unnatural parents. Trouble, terror, and consternation seized every heart. Every one of the criminal spectators were eager to save themselves. These young girls took advantage of the general confusion to retire promptly from these palaces, which they so much abhorred, and Sophia and Eulalie thanked the Lord for the marvellous deliverance of these innocent victims.

Voluptuousness, now nearly abandoned, commanded her faithful favourites to carry away the corpses of the dead from her dwelling, and to re-assemble her court. Her orders were immediately executed. Her disciples returned from every quarter : the balls recommenced ; the concerts were again heard ; the whole scene was renewed as heretofore ; and, perhaps, even with more licentiousness. As Voluptuousness was examining the rock which had fallen, she perceived, on the top of the hill Sophia and Eulalie, who had still their arms

uplifted to Heaven. She looked attentively at them, and recognised them well by their appearance. She quickly told Seduction to go to these young persons, recommending her to use every artifice, and employ every snare to gain them. "I well know," she said to her, "your superior talents. Thus, it is you alone whom I have reserved for this illustrious conquest, which will cover you with immortal glory." Echo repeated these words to the fervent companions, and they cried out, with common accord, "Let us fly—let us fly with all speed. Behold, the most crafty and the most wicked of creatures is coming to ruin us. Holy Fervour, lend us your wings!"

CHAPTER XVII.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE MEET NEGLIGENCE.

SOPHIA and Eulalie, flying in haste from the abominable dwelling of Voluptuousness, came at length near to a gloomy forest, where they thought they might with safety slacken their speed and take a little breath. The trees of this forest were bare; they produced neither fruits nor flowers. This barren spot bore

everywhere the desolating appearance of Winter. The pools were all frozen, and the cold seemed insupportable to all those who were unaccustomed to live in this severe climate. As our travellers approached, the cold, keen wind pierced them through and through. These two delicate companions soon experienced the effects of the frigid temperature ; but they encouraged each other to support its rigour. "This is," said Sophia, "without doubt, that narrow way, all covered with thorns, which we have been instructed to follow." "Yes," answered the ardent Eulalie, "this is the road which leads to the happy place of our desires. Let us, my dear friend, bear the cross with love, and suffer joyfully for that God who is preparing for us immortal crowns." They imagined at first that this way was little frequented ; but what was their surprise to perceive, after a time, a great number of persons in it ; some well wrapped up in ermine walking in the sun, and others seated with great tranquillity before good fires.

Sophia and Eulalie were therefore quickly undeceived ; but could not understand how so many people could live in such utter idleness. Eulalie addressed herself to the first person she met, and asked who was Queen of these places ? The other replied that she was the amiable Negligence, the

elder sister of Tepidity. "She is," added this person, "a very accomplished and agreeable lady. She is coming to meet you, accompanied by the prudent Pusillanimity. As, my dear children, you are exceedingly cold, I am sure our obliging Mistresses will not fail to take you into yonder hall, where you will find fires brightly blazing, by which you can warm your frozen limbs; commodious couches to repose upon, and an abundance of refreshments to repair your strength." "See," said Sophia, in a low voice, to Eulalie, "see what honourable titles they here bestow upon those two dangerous women. Pusillanimity greatly assists Negligence to succeed in her designs. When the latter wishes to induce a soul to abandon the zealous actions which have been counselled by Fervour, the former commences by persuading this soul that everything in the service of the Lord is too difficult, and that it is impossible to succeed in pleasing so severe and rigid a Master. By these false representations she makes Christians fall into discouragement, and she fills the regions of the detestable Negligence with inhabitants."

As Sophia concluded these words, the two companions saw the Queen of this country walking slowly towards them, with an air of carelessness and laziness which plainly showed that she was a


lover of repose and idleness. She desired to stop the young travellers, and endeavoured to induce them to relax their speed ; she earnestly begged them to take a little repose with her, and she promised them all kinds of amusements. " You can never," she said to them, " continue this speed in the rough and painful way which you have chosen. It is imprudence, indiscretion, and even rashness, to undertake that which is beyond the strength of the most robust men. You have undertaken a journey, the fatigues of which it is impossible to bear. Your project far surpasses the delicacy of your constitution ; there is every reason why you should defer a little longer to execute this journey ; and it is only a part of wisdom and prudence to await the arrival of a maturer age to deliver yourselves up to the exercises of Penance. Prevent, therefore, a bitter repentance ; enjoy this most beautiful time of your life, and pass it in sweet and agreeable repose. Before consecrating yourselves to the service of God, let the fire of your youthful vivacity be a little appeased ; by adopting this wise conduct, your resolution being made with much reflection, will be all the more lasting and durable."

Pusillanimity joined her voice to that of her inseparable friend. She applauded all she said, and

made also fresh endeavours to seduce Sophia and Eulalie. But these souls, faithful to their God, would not listen to her insidious words. They were very far removed from deferring one single instant the sacrifice which they wished to make to the Lord every moment of their lives. Therefore, in order to deliver themselves from the importunate presence of Negligence and her companion, they redoubled their steps with so much ardour that these indolent women could not follow them, and were compelled to retire from the contest ; but not without loudly and freely bestowing upon them the epithets of fools, indiscreet, rash, presumptuous, and, at the same time, foretelling terrible dangers and invincible obstacles. However, as nothing is capable of terrifying fervent souls who have entire confidence in the Divine Goodness, Sophia and Eulalie simply despised the vain threats of their enemies, and continued their way with a zeal and courage which were proof against all difficulties.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FERVOUR, HOLY DESIRE, AND VIGILANCE RETURN
TO SOPHIA AND EULALIE, AND MAKE KNOWN
TO THEM THE GREAT DANGER THEY HAVE
AVOIDED.

OPHIA and Eulalie, departing promptly from the perilous vicinity of Negligence, were agreeably surprised to meet their venerable Guides. What were then their transports of joy! They rendered to them all the honours they possibly could; with the most lively expressions they testified the greatness of their gratitude. These adorable Virtues on their side, showed marks of the tenderest affection for their young Disciples. After the mutual salutations were over, Sophia, addressing herself to Vigilance, said to her: "How much we are indebted to you, O prudent Mistress! You wisely forearmed us against all the artifices which our enemies employed to cause our ruin! Without your advice, what would have become of us? Our ignorance would have plunged us into the most terrible misery. But having always present in our minds the truths you taught us, we have already, with the assistance of Grace, gained some victories."

“O amiable Fervour,” said Eulalie, “without you, into how many abysses would my inexperience have precipitated me? I knew not all these Vices, those furious adversaries. Without your powerful protection, I should have succumbed to the snares of Seduction; I should have allowed myself to have been taken by the charms of Voluptuousness; weary and faint as I was when Negligence met us, I should have accepted the fatal repose to which she invited me; at the sight of my feebleness, I should have yielded to the seducing discourse of Pusillanimity; I should now have been the most ungrateful of all creatures; I should have been in your eyes a horrible monster. This thought makes me tremble with fear and dread!”

“Be consoled, my daughter,” answered Fervour, at the same time hiding her under her wings; “fear nothing, I will be always with you; never abandon me.”

“No,” replied young Eulalie, with a simplicity which piety ennobled; “no, my dear mother, I love you too well ever to separate from you. I wish to love you, and will love you to my latest breath. I make with my whole heart the same protestation of friendship to my tender brother, Holy Desire.”

“My dear children,” said Vigilance, “we have

already been pleased with your fidelity in avoiding the snares which have been laid for you, and we have come to congratulate you upon having received so many favours from the liberal hand of God. You cannot thank Him too much, above all for His having given you strength to resist the malignant insinuations of Negligence. This woman is one of the greatest enemies that the Demon (who is jealous of your happiness) could have raised against you."

"Ah! my dear friends," said Fervour, "allow me to make known to you the greatness and extent of the danger to which you have been exposed. If you had followed the detestable Negligence, you would have fallen into most deplorable relaxation. Her presence is so fatal, that she corrupts all the fruits of past labours. No sooner does anyone walk in the pernicious way which she marks out, than, without perceiving it, they are cast into the greatest disorders. If they do not return promptly from their wanderings, it is nearly certain that they will be lost for all eternity."

"Fervour speaks most truly," said Holy Desire, "for see how this terrible enemy conducts herself. She constantly endeavours to extinguish in souls the sweet ardour which Fervour excites, and to make them also resist my lively solicitations and

pressing invitations ; she first counsels them to quit those exercises which are performed out of devotion, under the frivolous pretext that these do not bind under sin. If they yield in this point, they then soon commence to omit the most essential duties ; they acquit themselves of them with indifference and tepidity, and even this they only do by force. In fine, they act only through human respect, and do nothing to please the Lord. Nevertheless, they live tranquil in this criminal idleness, under the shade of a few barren, sterile works of Religion, they are satisfied, they sleep ; until at length this fatal charm conducts them imperceptibly to Final Impenitence and Eternal Death."

These last words made Sophia and Eulalie tremble. Vigilance perceived it, and was touched by their sensibility. " You tremble," she said to them, " my dear children, and you cannot have more just motives for doing so. Fervour and Holy Desire have not spoken too strongly. Such in effect are the miserable effects which Negligence produces in the souls of those who deliver themselves up to her. Therefore, give thanks to the Most High without ceasing for having delivered you from her hands. Be always on your guard, and take every precaution to avoid the dangers which threaten you from enemies on every side."

"Always," said Fervour, "always perform even the most indifferent actions with a love and attention worthy of the Adorable Master you serve."

"Fear," added Holy Desire, "even the appearance of Negligence. Never be of the number of those soft, languishing, indolent, idle, apathetic persons. None are less fitted for the kingdom of God, the Palace of True Happiness."

Holy Desire was still speaking, when Tepidity appeared; but she no sooner perceived Fervour and the other two Virtues, than, covered with shame, she entered into an obscure cloud, disappeared the same moment, and never dared to show her face again. Sophia and Eulalie, seeing their Guides vanishing out of sight, once more promised inviolable fidelity to them. Then they again, in God's holy Presence, recommenced to walk alone in the path the Saints have trod.

CHAPTER XIX.

SINCERITY UNDECEIVES SOPHIA AND EULALIE, WHO HAD BEEN DELUDED BY THE EXTERIOR OF HYPOCRISY.



OPHIA and Eulalie continued their journey conversing with each other on the Goodness of God, and singing His

praises. Their voices ascended even to the Palace of True Happiness. This agreeable concert delighted the Celestial Spirits ; but Hell, enraged against them, did not allow them to enjoy for any length of time this sweet satisfaction. As they were travelling on, they came to a large and dark-looking house, which they might well have taken for the sombre asylum of Death. A dark, brown-coloured veil covered the entrance. To the middle of this veil was attached a board, upon which was written in large letters of gold : " House of Recollection and Prayer." The young travellers gazed with astonishment upon this pompous title. They knew not what to think, when suddenly they saw coming to meet them a woman whose appearance was very grave and modest. Her countenance was pale and emaciated ; she resembled some austere Anchorite. Her manners were quite composed, and she seemed little removed from that evangelical simplicity which Jesus Christ has recommended to us. This woman, disguised with so much dissimulation, approached Sophia and Eulalie, and pressed them to enter her house ; she assured them that they would find everything that was pious and edifying, and that they would taste a lasting, sweet, and perfect peace. As the whole pleasure of this odious woman consists in boasting

of the good works, which she does not practise, she gave to the young companions a long detail of her manner of living. To hear her speak, she did good to all ; she surpassed the greatest saints in austerity and mortification ; she passed whole days and nights in prayer and contemplation ; she had already arrived at the highest step of the ladder of the spiritual life. She finished her narration by inviting Sophia and Eulalie to be enrolled amongst the number of her disciples. "Come, my dear children," she said to them ; "come, fight under my banner, you will soon be loved, honoured and respected ; all will be eager to render to you the homage which true sanctity deserves." These last words ought to have made the companions suspect her ; but they were ignorant of the art of feigning sanctity, and would have had a great scruple in thinking ill of any one ; thus they allowed themselves to be deceived by this artful woman. They took her for a lady of eminent virtue. Her discourse seemed to them animated by the Spirit of God, and they therefore had no difficulty in following her into her dangerous dwelling. The Lord, who watched over His servants with paternal goodness, did not abandon them in this critical situation. He had compassion on their ignorance, and did not permit that what they

had done in good faith, should be hurtful to them.

This crafty mistress was already preparing to give to her young pupils their first lesson, when an amiable lady sent by God, came to their assistance. She announced herself with that candour and artlessness which renders her so charming. "Where are you, my dear sisters?" she said to the two young companions. "What are you doing in this asylum of Falsehood? I am Sincerity: behold my most terrible enemy." At the same moment, the crafty woman who had deceived them became very terrified; at the simple mention of the name of Sincerity, her mask fell off; she appeared such as she is in reality, hideous, frightful, horrible. Covered with confusion upon beholding her deformity discovered to view, she quickly fled away, and went to bury her shame and remorse in a deep cavern.

The surprise of Sophia and Eulalie was extreme, when they perceived that this apparent modesty and mortification which had imposed upon them, was only a disguise used to deceive men more easily. Being now undeceived, they expressed their gratitude to Sincerity, and begged her to describe to them the character of this wicked woman who had so unworthily abused their simplicity. The

amiable virgin willingly yielded to their request, and said : "The name of this odious woman is Hypocrisy. She is detested both by God and man ; even the most wicked hold her in abhorrence. She never prays except in public and when she is sure of being seen ; she ostentatiously displays the exterior of a penitent life ; but in reality she abounds in delights and reposes with Softness. She pretends to be modest, recollected, fervent ; she however takes little pains to be so in reality, but ardently desires to be so reputed. If she distributes alms, she is always careful to sound the trumpet in order to attract admirers. Her whole life is one continued piece of deception, she appears to be the very opposite of what she really is, and she artfully disguises the poison which her lips unceasingly distil."

- Sincerity desiring more perfectly to inform
- Sophia and Eulalie of the evils of which Hypocrisy was the cause, showed them in what manner her dwelling was the detestable school to which all the vices repair to learn to hide themselves under deceitful appearances. She pointed out to them Pride, who was endeavouring to disguise himself with the garments of humility, and who a little after adorned himself with the vain titles of strength of mind and greatness of soul. Further on she

discovered to them Falsehood, who was covering himself with a veil which he had stolen from Prudence. After walking a few more steps she pointed out to them two women who bore a most striking resemblance to each other, and told them that their names were Backbiting and Calumny. "See," said she, "how artfully they colour the poison of asps which they bear on their lips, see how they study to compose their gestures, voice and discourse, the better to succeed in their wicked plots." She then showed them Ambition, who endeavoured to excuse his passion under the specious pretext of a noble emulation. She also called their attention to Libertinism, who affected a decent and honest appearance, and who declared that he procured for young people all kinds of innocent amusements. "You have now," said Sincerity to her new favourites, "seen sufficient to understand that in this abominable place all the vices are transformed into virtues. Here insatiable Avarice, is Prudent Economy; and Prodigality, is Beneficence. But above all take notice of that woman whose face is shrivelled, pale and emaciated; her name is False Devotion. Ah! how terrible she is! how infinitely to be feared! You cannot hold her in too great abhorrence! She stops at the rind and cares only for the exterior of piety. In

public, she endeavours to appear humble, modest, recollected, sweet, patient, and charitable ; but in truth she is proud, sensual, dissipated, capricious, haughty and vindictive. Among all the vices, False Devotion is the most assiduous in taking lessons from Hypocrisy, and the most faithful to put them in practice. Thus these two women are most intimately united together, and they are scarcely ever separated." After these useful instructions, Sincerity led Sophia and Eulalie from this house of death into which their imprudence had led them. "Never return hither again," she said to them, "for this is the school of Falsehood and the asylum of Dissimulation." The two young travellers heartily thanked their deliverer for having drawn them out of so great peril. Sincerity kindly received their thanksgivings, embraced them, and placed them in the way which leads to eternal life. She recommended them to excite each other continually to walk on with new and greater courage.

CHAPTER XX.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE THROUGH THE COUNSELS OF VIGILANCE TRIUMPH OVER SELF-WILL.

SOPHIA and Eulalie had scarcely quitted Sincerity, when they saw their admirable Guides reappearing. Young Eulalie, overwhelmed with joy, ran with all possible speed and cast herself into the arms of Fervour.

"It was wrong," said this Virtue to her, with a sweetness and goodness which took away nearly all the bitterness of her correction ; "it was wrong to enter the house of Hypocrisy, and listen to the lessons of so pernicious a mistress. Do you, who until the present time have been sincerity itself, wish to learn the wicked art of cleverly feigning and dissimulating?"

"No, my dear mother," answered Eulalie with tears in her eyes ; "this wicked woman deceived me with her mortified air and edifying words."

"But," replied Fervour, "did not the real truth pierce through all that borrowed attire? Could not all the exaggerated praises this dangerous woman gave herself, open your eyes and unveil her deception and imposture? Is true piety ever united with so much pride?"

This amiable child, who knew not how to excuse herself, confessed the greatness of her indiscretion. "You are right, my good mother," she said, "I am altogether wrong; I am very guilty. Oh what a great sin I have committed! With all my heart I beg God to pardon me. To-morrow morning I will go to the venerable Counsel, humbly confess my sin, and beg him to impose a severe penance upon me."

"Be tranquil, my dear children," said Vigilance; "do not forget to thank the Lord for having so efficaciously assisted you in this great peril. You were upon the brink of a horrible precipice, and you would infallibly have fallen over if His beneficent hand had not rescued you. Admire so singular a favour, be grateful for it, and humble yourself before the Supreme Majesty for your imprudence and for your unfaithfulness in following my instructions." The two companions immediately prostrated themselves in great humility, and watered the ground with their tears.

Holy Desire bid them rise, and assured them that their fault was blotted out. "Draw advantage," he added, "from this fall, for the future, take care to be always on your guard. Always preserve the good opinion you ought to have of your neighbour, and never doubt his probity with-

out a manifest cause ; but at the same time prudently take every precaution, so as not to be surprised. Self-Will accompanied by a numerous train is now coming to meet you ; make good use of the salutary advice that Vigilance will give you, for by so doing you will be victorious over her. Remember that Self-Will is not less to be feared than Hypocrisy.

“This haughty and imperious woman commands as a Queen all persons who live under her laws. She appears accustomed to be obeyed with the greatest punctuality. She may be heard repeating every moment, *I will I desire It pleases me to do so. . . . I will go I will do it Such is my will. . . .* Thus she is always speaking of herself with proud and foolish complacency ; she believes that she knows everything, understands everything, and does everything in the most perfect manner. If any one thinks of opposing or contradicting her desires ever so little, she is immediately irritated and falls into a violent passion. She turns pale with anger, gnashes her teeth, cries aloud and vomits forth injuries. Those who have offended her speedily become the victims of her resentment.

“At her right hand there is a man whose excessive agitation keeps him in perpetual motion. He

is never at rest; he never reflects; none of his actions are conducted by Prudence. He examines nothing; he cannot suffer the least delay; the slightest obstacle which is opposed to his designs puts him in a rage; in fine, he is in everything guided by his turbulent vivacity, and nothing is more ordinary than to see him act like a madman.

"This indiscreet person," said Vigilance, "is called Eagerness. He is one of the most intimate friends of Self-Will, and she has a particular predilection for him. Look also to the left of Self-Will, and you will see her faithful companion, whose name is Disquietude. This woman is never tranquil. She is always preoccupied with a thousand objects, a thousand designs which her ever active imagination conjures up. She torments and wearies herself, she is never at peace, nor does she ever allow others to be so. The want of connection observable in her discourse, clearly shows the agitation and derangement of her thoughts. By her wandering looks you may see the trouble, confusion, and disorder which reign in her soul. These are the dearest friends of Self-Will; they are her support, and usually regulate all her proceedings.

"The multitude of children who are hovering around her, are the Volatile Desires and the Fan-

ciful Caprices. Look, now, at that innumerable multitude of persons who come to render their servile homage to this Queen. They compose her court. Some amuse themselves with the Fanciful Caprices; they are content with none, yet they cannot resolve to quit them. Others address themselves to the Volatile Desires; they are no happier. All that the Volatile Desires can do for them is to cause them to give vent to useless sighs and form affections which are often criminal, and always without fruit. See, also, those others who, tired of being with these light and inconstant children, turn their steps towards Disquietude. They cannot, however, find with her the means of satisfying themselves. Their last resource is to deliver themselves to the ardours of Eagerness, and this imprudent person spoils all the so-called pleasures to which he introduces them. He destroys with one hand that which he has just built up with the other, and at length introduces them to his mistress, and recommends them to her. Examine carefully the manner in which Self-Will overwhelms them with caresses, and appears to grant them all they desire. Consider attentively the joy which shines upon their countenances. May we not say that they have at length arrived at the very pinnacle of happiness? But ah! how

short, transient, and chimerical is this happiness! They soon languish for new objects, which in their turn only serve to augment their torments."

Vigilance, who was anxious to instruct her two pupils thoroughly, showed them clearly the evils of which Self-Will is the source, and how dangerous it is for souls to become her slaves. "To convince yourselves, my dear children," she said to them, "of all the disasters of which she is the cause, reflect with me upon all you have seen. It is in the school of Self-Will that the child learns to despise all the counsels and instructions of its masters, to shake off the yoke of obedience, and revolt against the most legitimate and venerable authority. Oh! to how many disorders does this spirit of independence give birth! The rich man devoted to Self-Will cannot endure a rival. He believes himself the most miserable of men if he is compelled to recognise the authority of superiors who exact submission from him. No sooner does a woman of moderate fortune open her soul to this ruling passion, than she can no longer support the happy state in which God in His mercy has placed her. She wishes to elevate herself to where He has not called her; she is agitated and disquieted; she intrigues and seeks to be brought out; she exposes herself, wanders out of the way, is lost,

and renders herself unhappy in time, and too often, alas! for all eternity!

“The Poor Man, who is ruled by Self-Will, murmurs against His Creator, blasphemes His Wisdom, audaciously complains against His Providence. He is irritated, he groans, he storms, he envies the good of others; he curses the hard-heartedness of the rich. Does he return from his excess of anger? He is not then more easy, nor less to be pitied. Deprived of the consolations which God grants to His faithful servants, he drags on his languishing days drenched with gall and bitterness; and if Death surprises him in his revolt, from a transient poverty which should have been his merit and his crown, he is through his own fault, plunged into an irremediable and infinitely more terrible indigence.

“The Devout person seduced by Self-Will, soon becomes a false Devotee, and the scandal of Religion. She traces for herself a plan of easy and convenient piety, always in accordance with her own humour, and in conformity with her own way of thinking. Good works have attractions for her only when they call the attention of others to her. She practises only those spiritual exercises which please her. Indulgent to herself, and severe towards others, her zeal is harsh and bitter. She

is very zealous in censuring her neighbour, her affected modesty seeming to give her this right. Extremely sensible to the least injury, she dissembles and covers her resentment with the most specious and imposing titles. She adopts a mode of life so fantastic that she makes herself insupportable to everybody. She causes true Christians to be held in such bad repute, that feeble and timid souls are prevented from embracing virtue. She has little charity, and still less humility. She obeys her parents only as long as this obedience is conformable to her own fanciful ideas. She esteems it a great crime to fail in the least observance which, according to her own inclination, she has imposed upon herself; but she has no scruple to neglect the most indispensable obligations and duties of her state. It is thus she sleeps in a fatal security, which conducts her to eternal ruin and condemnation.

“You now see, my dear children,” added Vigilance, “how pernicious Self-Will, the eldest daughter of Pride, is to souls. She wearies them, torments them, charges them with a labour the only fruit of which is death. On the contrary, those who follow the Will of the Lord, receive with the same tranquillity good and evil; their faith changes their sadness into joy, and they are always con-

tented in whatever situation Providence places them. Nothing which happens surprises them, nor afflicts them, nor casts them down. To obey and please God is their only ambition. This is the only true happiness which can give to the soul that pure satisfaction and delicious peace, which are the foretaste and the pledge of the everlasting repose, which she will enjoy eternally in the bosom of her Creator."

Vigilance was still speaking, when Self-Will, desirous of extending her empire, and anxiously longing to submit Sophia and Eulalie to her laws, sent to them the most refined and amiable of the Volatile Desires who unceasingly hover around her ; but the young pupils of Vigilance, faithful to the instructions of their prudent mistress, would not so much as listen to these dangerous ambassadors ; but indignantly repulsed them and sent them back covered with shame and confusion. Eagerness also came ; but succeeded no better than the Volatile Desires. Disquietude, with her pale livid countenance, then appeared ; she placed herself first on one side, then on the other, she knew not what to resolve upon. At length she determined to return to her proud queen without having dared to undertake anything. Self-Will, pierced to the quick by these defeats which her

messengers sustained, came herself with an affected and composed air. She flattered herself that two girls in the flower of their age would never be able to resist her. She saluted them and invited them to follow her. She promised them sweet liberty and perfect contentment ; she assured them that in her company they would meet with no constraint, and added, "You are no longer children to allow yourselves to be guided by leading-strings ; you have now attained a mature age and ought to conduct yourselves. You are not made to obey, but to command ; come with me, in my kingdom you shall be two little queens." Sophia and Eulalie stopped their ears that they might not hear such discourse ; they answered this proud woman only by promising to God with more ardour than ever, a prompt and faithful obedience, and a constant submission, proof against all seduction.

Then Vigilance told them to save themselves by flight, "For," said she, "it is dangerous to dispute with this cruel enemy of your souls. Her speech is extremely seducing, and agrees marvellously with the inclinations of corrupt nature, which is prone to revolt against all authority."

When Vigilance had said this, Fervour took them by the hand, and bid them travel speedily on towards the Palace of the Virtues. Holy Desire

preceded them and Vigilance followed them. Self-Will, little accustomed to the like refusals, was in despair at seeing herself vanquished. She was astonished that delicate girls, who are ordinarily so sensible to her charms, should have prevailed over her ; she regarded the prey which had escaped with an eye flashing with anger, indignation and rage. She could not moderate her grief, and she cursed the place of her shameful defeat.

CHAPTER XXI.

VIGILANCE DEPICTS TO SOPHIA AND EULALIE THE
DEFORMITY OF ENVY AND JEALOUSY.



WHILE Vigilance was teaching her young disciples to watch over all their senses, and to diffide in themselves, Fervour and Holy Desire took care to excite in their souls the most ardent love for the Supreme Beauty. The two companions, with the assistance of their guides, continuing to advance in the Way of Salvation, came near to an obscure dwelling which had all the appearance of a place of desolation and despair. A great number of people were departing hurriedly from this horrible place, and entered

into a grove, the trees and shrubs of which had dried up and withered away.

Two women of low stature walked at the head of this numerous train. They had so striking a resemblance to each other, that the spectator might easily have taken them for twin sisters. One of them was standing, and proudly gazing around her; the other was seated upon the ground, her head supported upon one of her hands, her face half hidden from sight. The countenances of both were dried up and withered by the vehemence and bitterness of their sorrow; their hearts were overwhelmed with weariness and disgust; they continually uttered deep groans, and their faces were from time to time watered with their tears. They both carried a bow, and a quiver filled with arrows. In the physiognomy of the one who was standing, there could be discovered a greater boldness and cruelty than in the other. At their right hand was a man who remained immovable, his eyes fixed upon the ground without uttering a single word. If the two sisters simply looked at him it was sufficient to give him an excess of sadness. At their left, was an old woman, whose sallow complexion, deep-set eyes and ferocious looks, inspired all who beheld her with terror. These four persons were

accompanied by a multitude of children whose wickedness equalled their vivacity.

Sophia and Eulalie in astonishment at this sad spectacle, asked Vigilance what they were to think of this sinister-looking company. Vigilance answered :

“The woman who is seated, is the odious Jealousy. She is overwhelmed with the weight of her evils ; she cannot perceive in others the advantages which she has not, without experiencing bitter chagrin, this is for her an inexhaustible source of tears. The happiness of others, which should be a subject of joy, becomes her continual torment. What feebleness ! What folly ! What an abomination !

“The other woman, so proud and haughty, is the detestable Envy. She has no repose ; she is afflicted to find that she has rivals, for she cannot endure that any one should dispute the first rank with her. The good of others rends her heart, because she imagines that it effaces, or at least diminishes her glory. She is only happy when others are miserable ; their adversity is the complement of her greatest prosperity. Her most horrible anguish is to see them succeed ; all the benedictions which Heaven pours upon them, are for her just so many maledictions. Like the glow-

worms which shine only in the darkness, she desires to see everybody in obscurity, that thus she alone may appear with honour.

“The man that you have remarked, the sight alone of whom augments the sorrow and despair of these twin sisters, is Dejection. Listen attentively ; when this contemptible man has rendered himself master of a soul, he, so to say, suspends and stops the movement of all its powers. He seems to take from it the liberty of willing and desiring ; indeed, scarcely leaving it the faculty of thinking. He so overwhelms the soul with depression, that he ravishes it of almost every sentiment, and leaves behind nothing but extreme discouragement, which renders it for a time incapable of any good.

“The old woman you see, whose imagination and judgment are much impaired by her morose and gloomy disposition, is Melancholy. She exposes all her slaves to terrible torture ; she pours bitterness upon all the sweetness of their lives, and converts their most innocent pleasures into veritable pains. Through her witchcraft, the most amiable persons lose all their attractions ; the most delightful and entertaining companions become wearisome and fatiguing, and a consoler is rejected as a persecutor. She requires them to be alone with her, that so she

may with impunity, tear the miserable heart which she has seduced, and afflict the feeble spirit which she has blinded.

“That multitude of children who surround her, are called Vexations. Jealousy and Envy are their mothers and mistresses. They make them run hither and thither according to their pleasure, and they spread desolation all around.

“You need not be surprised,” added Vigilance, “that all these persons agree so well together; they have so many relations with each other that they are seldom separated. Jealousy gives disciples to Envy, and Envy gives disciples to Jealousy. They produce in souls nearly the same effects; they endeavour to ruin the objects of their hatred by dark and secret plots; sometimes leaving their victims ignorant of the fire which is devouring them; other times they cannot dissimulate their vengeance. They insinuate themselves into the hearts of all who do not watch with sufficient care to defend themselves from their envenomed darts. Even persons who make profession of piety and spirituality are not always exempt; but in them, Jealousy and Envy know how to disguise themselves, better than in others. These two artful creatures then hide themselves under the appearance of Devotion; they even cover themselves with

the mantle of Fervour, Zeal, and Charity, that so they may reign with greater security. Under this veil how many evils do they cause among good people ! They give birth to antipathies, rancours, animosities, enmities, quarrels, and divisions, which dishonour Virtue, and cause the enemies of God to blaspheme against Religion. For you, my dear children, be prepared for the attacks of these perpetual persecutors ; but let the solidity and verity of your piety be seen by your invincible patience ; this will be the true means of confounding them. Do you wish to be sheltered from their darts ? Never blame, never censure those who surpass you. On the contrary, let a noble emulation always engage you to imitate what you admire in others ; their brilliant actions should be to you a stimulus to excite you to walk in their footsteps. Remember that you cannot love God without ardently desiring that His love should reign in every heart ; neither can you love your brethren, if you do not rejoice over their advantages : this joy is not extraordinary to a soul who sincerely hates and despises herself. Be truly humble, and then you will be always preserved from the mortal wounds of Envy and Jealousy."

While Vigilance was thus speaking to her pupils, she perceived Envy endeavouring to pierce them

with her poisoned arrows. She immediately covered them with her shield, and rendered the efforts of this audacious enemy useless. The young travellers, by the counsels of Vigilance and the assistance of Fervour and Holy Desire, were rapidly ascending a mountain, from which, without fear of harm, they could see a multitude of persons blindly following these detestable vices. Some were inflamed with the fires of Envy, and abandoned themselves to her furious transports ; others, a prey to the baseness and malignity of Jealousy, experienced the chagrin and disgust she begets in her followers. Sophia and Eulalie could see them turn pale, become emaciated, water the ground with their tears, break the most sacred bonds without any respect, and pursue to death those who had loved them with greatest tenderness. In one place they saw a man enraged against his own brother, and determined on his ruin, simply because nature had made him more amiable than himself. In another place, they heard one endeavouring to depreciate the glory of a man, whose wisdom, science, and virtue elevated him above others ; to succeed in this, he did all he could to ruin his character with his acquaintances, and used every effort to eclipse his brilliant qualities by fabricating, with the greatest injustice, an infinity of defects with which he

charged him. Thus, all who follow Envy and Jealousy, have no other occupation than to be angry with those who have received a better portion of the goods of Grace and Fortune than themselves, and to seek the means of satisfying their vengeance. If they have neither the strength nor the power to avenge themselves, they endeavour to bury their shameful passion, and voluntarily plunge themselves into the most bitter and useless sadness.

Sophia and Eulalie having been well instructed upon the disorders which necessarily follow in the train of Envy and Jealousy, felt the most lively horror of these two vices, and firmly resolved to avoid them with the greatest care. They were in these happy dispositions when they met with a new occasion of testifying their love for God. The objects upon which they were now to gaze were much calculated to flatter and satisfy their self-love; which rendered the temptation more delicate, and more difficult to be overcome by these young hearts; but Grace, who reigned in their souls, and their vigilant Guides, aided them to surmount these new obstacles, and speedily gave them the victory.

CHAPTER XXII.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE DO NOT ALLOW THEMSELVES
TO BE DAZZLED BY VANITY.



S Sophia and Eulalie were marching with great ardour in the holy Way in which God was conducting them, they saw upon their road a superb edifice, which resembled one of those ancient temples erected in honour of the false gods of Paganism. At one of the extremities of an immense and capacious corridor adorned with marble pillars, there was placed, under a magnificent canopy, a platform, covered with a carpet, which was embroidered in a most costly manner. Under this canopy, and upon this platform, Vanity was standing upon four pyramids of the rarest and most esteemed jewels. It was very easy to recognise her. Arrayed as a Divinity, she required homage to be paid to her as such. She was clothed in sumptuous attire, in which gold and precious stones shone in every part. A thousand hands, clever in a dangerous art, had emulated each other in adorning her criminal head ; her attractions, being enhanced by so many ornaments, were calculated to inspire the most violent passions. There was seated near her, her unworthy companion

Immodesty, who is rarely separated from her. This scandalous woman has indecency in all her comportment; her fixed and insolent gaze makes the boldest blush; her mouth, the faithful interpreter of her sentiments, is opened only to utter seducing words calculated to produce in her hearers the most fatal corruption.

Vanity, besides this dear favourite, was also surrounded by a multitude of young persons of both sexes, who are very useful to her in procuring her disciples, or rather, slaves and adorers. They are called Fashions, Novelties, Usages, Customs of the World. All these persons are wholly employed in the service of their Sovereign, and scrupulously follow her taste and caprice in everything. They regulate their gestures, looks, attitudes, and all their proceedings, according to her pleasure; they are continually changing their clothing and attire; they study to dress themselves in the most foolish and ridiculous manner. They frequently take lessons from Immodesty, and, unhappily, they put them too much in practice. Two men, called Bad Example and Attraction for Pleasure, constantly stand at the door of Vanity's dwelling, to invite the passers-by to enter in. They boast aloud of the chimerical satisfactions which are tasted in that place. "Here," say they, "we pass away the

delightful days of life in a sweet intoxication of pleasure. Plays and laughter dwell here, and youth above all enjoys the most perfect felicity." Those who allow themselves to be seduced by these dazzling promises are immediately introduced into the apartments of Vanity. Scarcely have they entered than Coquetry, that impassioned young woman, induces them to lay aside the rich treasures of Innocence and Wisdom, to be clothed with the livery of a refined libertinism, which is hidden under the colour of Propriety. She teaches them that Modesty and Reserve are remains of the imbecility of childhood, prejudices of an imperfect education, and that they are weaknesses unworthy of a great mind. According to her, the most seducing discourse, is simply a charming gaiety ; sensual pleasures, are a permitted recreation ; free manners, a polite civility ; effrontery, is an agreeable sportiveness ; in a word, her whole discourse inspires the most shameful vice under honourable names, or under the specious pretext of necessity and duty.

As Vigilance was making known to Sophia and Eulalie the bad character of these different persons, they saw a very convincing proof of their malice and wickedness. A mother, who for a long time had given herself to the service of Vanity, entirely delivered to the disorders which she causes, and

wholly occupied with the desire of pleasing the world, had a daughter worthy of all her care. This child had received from the Creator all the natural qualities capable of rendering her amiable ; but the gifts of a lively and penetrating spirit, and a simple soul, sensible to the charms of virtue, rendered her dear to the Heart, and precious in the eyes of the Lord, who had bestowed these gifts upon her. The singular graces with which God had endowed this young person, exacted the whole attention of her who was charged with this sacred deposit. But it was otherwise ; for the exterior qualities were speedily preferred to the supernatural gifts of Grace. This tender plant, which in budding forth had been nourished with celestial dew, was soon transplanted to a dry, arid, and foreign soil. The very one whom Heaven had made use of to bring her into the world, took from the garden of the Divine Spouse this inestimable flower, so difficult to preserve in all its purity and innocence.

But let us speak without figures. This mother, tired of the innocent ways of her daughter, which tacitly reproached her own irregular conduct, drew her from the bosom of piety, to produce her in the world, that abode of every vice, where the passions triumph, crime is honoured, and virtue

despised. As this corrupted world is altogether plunged in the pleasures of sense, thinks only of that which flatters the senses, and is entirely occupied in satisfying them, this worldly woman, desiring to make her daughter a victim worthy to be offered to the cruel tyrant who had captivated her own heart, omitted nothing calculated to enhance the bodily beauty of her daughter, even if it prejudiced her soul. For this purpose, this mother, (so unworthy to be one) constrained her daughter to accompany her to the dwelling of Vanity, in order that she might take lessons from her, and be instructed in the dangerous art of pleasing and attracting.

Sophia and Eulalie perceived her walking, with fear depicted on her countenance, towards that abode of scandal, trembling to approach this detestable place, fearing, and with reason, that it would soon become the tomb of her innocence. She kept her eyes fixed upon the ground; she dared not lift them to gaze upon those proscribed walls, which contained within them so many abominations. She believed she saw her misery and ruin written upon them. Happy would she have been if she had preserved this salutary fear; and if, like Esther, she had continued to mourn all the days of her life over the fatal necessity which

obliged her to live amidst the pomp and grandeur of the world. Nevertheless, she did not yield all at once to the efforts of Bad Example, Attraction for Pleasure, and Coquetry. She even for some time defended herself against all their assaults. But at length Attraction for Pleasure, by his enchanting discourse, softly insinuated himself into her heart, and then excited the most violent desires. To complete the defeat of this young person, he made use of people polite and honest in appearance, in whom she had less diffidence. Base adulators surrounded her, and overwhelmed her with the most misplaced praises. She listened too easily to them, and her indiscretion dug for her a profound abyss into which she was precipitated. O how painful, how sorrowful a spectacle. The purest and holiest of all creatures was seized with fear at the sight of an Angel who appeared to her under a human form ; and yet this sinful child of a guilty mother believed herself in safety when surrounded by a multitude of seducers. The Mother of God shrank at first from the respectful praises of the Celestial Ambassador ; and yet this girl, whose virtue was so weak and feeble, did not withdraw from the applause of positive sinners, who desired to lead her together with themselves in the way of perdition.

Vanity soon became this unfortunate creature's Queen and Idol. In following her maxims, her sole occupation was to enhance the fragile attractions of a vain beauty, by the greatest sumptuousness, and the choicest ornaments, frequently even the most indecent. In this state, she took great pleasure in walking through the streets of the infamous Babylon, seeking to see and be seen, laying snares for her brethren. Her eyes, from which penitential tears should have flown, or which should have been opened to gaze upon the marvels of the Lord, were employed to enkindle in hearts the impure flames of concupiscence. Her ears, destined to listen to the Divine Oracles, were opened only to the licentious discourse of Libertinism. In a word, she used the gifts which she had received from her Creator, to outrage Him in the most dreadful manner in a thousand ways. What a sad metamorphosis. Such is the terrible lot of those who pass their days in the asylum of Vanity, and who glory in living under her laws. Sophia and Eulalie felt perfectly persuaded of this. The disorders of this girl touched them to the bottom of their hearts. They could not restrain their tears in considering that innocent soul speedily become so completely miserable, that she seemed to find her joy in her evils, her healing in her wounds,

and her purity in her defilement. The misery that Vanity draws upon young persons who listen to her, fortified the young travellers in the resolution which they had taken of belonging entirely to God, and of flying for ever from the world, and all its false and deceitful charms.

Vigilance (seeing her pupils moved by the striking example which Divine Providence had for their instruction allowed them to witness) thus spoke to them, "You sigh, my dear children, and tears flow down your cheeks. You could not have a more fitting subject for them. The deplorable fall of this unfortunate one merits to be wept over with tears of blood. To convince you of this, I will represent to you the immense goods of which she is despoiled, and the terrible evils with which she is overwhelmed. She was a pure Virgin, a beautiful Lily planted in the garden of the Lord. She was a chosen daughter of the Most High, the Spouse of Jesus Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost. She was a chaste Dove, who was admired for the whiteness of her wings, and the golden plumage of her back. She was a brilliant Star, which dazzled the beholders with the brightness of its rays. This is what she was heretofore. But what has she now become? All her treasures are dissipated. Her glory is obscured. Her light is

extinguished. The beauty of her soul is changed into extreme deformity. The Angels who before complacently regarded her, now turn from her with horror. She has become a slave of the world, an agent of Satan, an enemy of her God. From whence has come this sudden and strange change? Alas! you know well, for you have been witness of it. Instead of distrusting her weakness, and resisting temptation, she listened to the tempter, took pleasure in hearkening to his voice, and little by little yielded to his persuasions. Vanquished without having been ashamed of it, she rejoiced to wear her chains. In vain her conscience reproached her with her desertion. She stifled its voice; she closed her ears to its salutary warnings. The Grace of God still calls her, and she despises the call. Her whole exterior indicates the terrible disorder of her soul. The noble and charming reserve, gravity, and modesty which adorned her forehead, and appeared in her whole countenance, are changed into a scandalous boldness and effrontery. Her faults were at first light; now the most enormous crimes are esteemed by her as nothing. She marches rapidly in the way of iniquity. See, my dear children," added Vigilance, "see where Vanity leads the imprudent ones who desire to range themselves under her standard.

Have therefore a holy mistrust of her wiles ; she is going to lay such snares for you, as are very capable of making an impression on young persons who are so favoured by nature."

While Sophia and Eulalie were attentively listening to the instructions of their excellent mistress, they were perceived by Vanity, who ardently desired to rank them among the number of her slaves. To succeed in her purpose, she sent to them some of her favourites, laden with all kinds of ornaments and perfumes. She recommended them to omit nothing which was calculated to seduce the innocent objects of their criminal embassy. The emissaries (by far too faithful) were eager to acquit themselves of their commission ; but the holy ardour which appeared upon the countenance of the amiable Fervour, the divine fire which shone in the eyes of Holy Desire, and the celestial majesty with which the venerable Vigilance was clothed, made them tremble. Seized with fear, they stopped, drew back, and prepared themselves for flight, without having declared the purpose for which they were sent. Nevertheless, in order to obey the precise orders which had been given to them, they approached with faltering steps. The great desire they had to succeed in their enterprise, reassured and encouraged them ;

they therefore at length advanced. Some displayed to Sophia and Eulalie the rich dresses and magnificent attire, which their Queen had sent them as a present; others commenced to anoint their heads with the most exquisite perfumes, which they had preserved in costly vases. All promised them that they should bask in the sunshine of most delightful pleasures, and that the Fashions, those sportive girls, should be entirely occupied with adorning and amusing them.

One of the boldest went so far as to endeavour to make the young travellers pity themselves, by exaggerating the pains and fatigues inseparable from the laborious journey they had undertaken.

"Why will you," said this one to them, "why will you bury yourselves alive in solitary deserts? Shall the advantages which Nature has so liberally bestowed upon you be henceforth useless? Shall the charms of youth just budding forth, be given to the same fate as those who have lost their beauty and attractions? Do you intend to cover yourselves with the dark clouds of profound sadness, weariness, and disgust? Such a reform as this will speedily conduct you to the gates of death. Do you consent to leave this world so easily, before having tasted the sweetness of life? Ah, no! Rather lay aside this foolish project, which was

conceived in a moment of delirium. Fly from these severe Guides, who by their constant rigour render your life insupportable. Follow us ; and Pleasure and Enjoyment shall be your inseparable companions ; your arrival at the palace of our Princess shall be celebrated by a thousand superb and magnificent feasts."

At the conclusion of these words, they made new endeavours, to induce the two pious Companions to accept the presents which had already been offered to them ; but they despised all these perfumes and vain attire, and disdained to receive them. They knew that the Sacred Spouse is not to be found in the tumult of the world, therefore they hastened to seek Him in retreat. They were not less persuaded that the beauty of the Spouse is interior, and that the ornaments most agreeable in His eyes, are modesty and simplicity. For this reason they indignantly rejected all these pomps of Satan.


Holy Desire pressed them to quit these seducers and to run to the Bountiful God, who was calling them that He might crown them with His gifts. Then the young Companions retired from these pernicious places with incredible speed ; Vigilance animated them, and Fervour lent them her wings ;

thus they advanced rapidly in the Way of Salvation !

The Messengers of Vanity, filled with astonishment at the fidelity with which these fervent souls corresponded to the grace of their vocation, could not refrain from admiring their courage, although they had not the fortitude necessary to follow their example. They therefore returned to their Queen, bearing no other fruit of their embassy than the shame of acknowledging themselves vanquished.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TRUTH COMES TO DEFEND SOPHIA AND EULALIE
AGAINST THE DARTS OF ERROR.

HE Demon was extremely enraged upon perceiving that all his efforts were useless, and that all the means he employed to accomplish the ruin of Sophia and Eulalie, served only to augment their merit and enhance their virtue. Not having yet been able to seduce them, he wished now to endeavour to shake their faith. For this purpose, he stirred up against them a detestable woman whom Hell has brought forth to infect the World with her poisonous breath.

The young travellers did not expect the cruel

war which the spirit of malice was about to declare against them. Nevertheless, they were not surprised, because Vigilance, who accompanied them, had recommended them to be always on their guard, and had warned them that the Devil continually goeth about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

As they were walking with salutary fear in the presence of God, they saw in the distance Error, who was rapidly advancing, dragging after her whole nations who had become her slaves. The sight of her made the two Companions tremble ; they immediately invoked the Lord, and besought Him to succour and defend them against this furious adversary, who was armed with a two-edged sword.

Their prayers were speedily heard. As they lifted up their eyes to the Throne of the Most High, in whom they placed all their hope, they perceived a most luminous cloud, which shed around them its admirable brightness. There came forth from this cloud a Lady, whose excelling beauty nothing here below can equal ; she was more resplendent than the Sun in his mid-day course. In every place through which she passed, she shed around a bright ray of light to enlighten the people. Candour reposed on her lips ; Sincerity was in all

her words ; her raiment, whiter than snow, was the symbol of her inviolable purity.

Sophia and Eulalie no sooner beheld this incomparable person, than they experienced in their hearts the impressions of a holy joy. Their eyes, struck with so much light without being dazzled by it, were never tired of admiring the charming object presented to their gaze. With laudable eagerness they requested Vigilance to tell them who this Lady was who advanced towards them with so majestic an air.

“ This Daughter of Heaven, this light of the world,” answered Vigilance, “ is Truth, who has been sent by God Himself to enlighten you, and to warn you against the snares of Error. Listen to her attentively, and faithfully retain all her words ; for they have proceeded from the mouth of the Supreme Being. It is the Holy Spirit who instructs her and communicates to her the eminent knowledge which she possesses. The multitude of her enemies, far from making her yield, serve only to multiply her triumphs. She is founded upon a firm rock, upon the promises of Jesus Christ. She cannot be vanquished ; she is always as beautiful, as just, as perfect as you see her now. The interests of God, alone affect her. Intrigue is unknown to her ; she abhors disguise ; she flies from Falsehood,

and is never leagued with her. Thus, to make herself loved, she uses no artifice ; she presents herself such as she is, with a noble simplicity and an ingenuous candour. This uprightness, which is her peculiar characteristic, renders her beloved by all those who sincerely seek the Lord. Therefore, joyfully become her Disciples ; augment her Court, and she will bestow upon you her choicest favours ; with her you will taste solid pleasures, which neither cause disgust nor remorse."

While Sophia and Eulalie were listening to the wise instructions of Vigilance, Truth approached them. This pure Virgin bestowed upon them a thousand caresses, telling them at the same time that she had been sent by the Almighty to defend them against the envenomed darts of Error. " You see," said she to them, " this insolent rival scornfully elevating her proud head. She carries the heavy chains with which she oppresses her captives. She steals from the Sovereign Pastor His sheep, that she may devour them ; she robs the Church of her well-beloved children that she may cause their ruin ; she plunges this cherished Spouse of the Saviour into the bitterest sadness ; she deprives Heaven of its citizens that she may fill the infernal prisons. Faithful imitator of Satan, her author and father, she desires to extinguish, if it were pos-

sible, the lamp of the true Faith. The poison of asps is under her lips ; all her words breathe seduction. She unites with her natural wickedness the craft of the old serpent. She employs artful promises, and sometimes even threats, to surprise innocent souls. Ah ! my dear children, how cruel is Error ! With how many evils has she inundated the world ? How many divisions has she caused ! How many rivers of blood have flown through the unjust wars of which she has a thousand times been the cause !

“ With keen sorrow I behold that multitude of holy Priests and Bishops struck with her mortal blows, bedewing with their blood the Altars upon which they have offered the most august sacrifice, and I see them uniting their last sigh to the mystic death of the God-Man. I represent to myself those generous Virgins who bravely combated with her even upon her throne, and who chose rather to sacrifice their earthly goods, their repose, and even their lives, than yield to her fury. I hear the plaintive cry of those illustrious solitaries chased from their retreat, either delivered to the sword, or become, through her malignity, a prey to the flames. My heart is moved with compassion at the remembrance of faithful Catholics, unworthily oppressed, who weep bitterly over the death of their

brethren in the Faith. But what afflicts me still more sensibly, is to see the astonishing progress which Error is making at the present time ; for alas ! she makes a greater number of guilty prevaricators than ever, and she experiences less resistance. There are but few brave soldiers willing to fight against her. Many ravening wolves formed in her school, and, hidden under sheep's clothing, are mixed with the flock of Jesus Christ. Cowardly hirelings fly at their approach, and abandon to the ferocity of these enemies, the lambs confided to their care. Thus, Error, after having destroyed Temples built by my hands for the honour and glory of the Eternal, continues to persecute me by robbing God of these living sanctuaries which I was preparing for Him.

“ But you, blessed souls, obedient daughters of the Catholic Church, nourished in her bosom, instructed in her laws, will not allow yourselves to be robbed of your inheritance by this furious persecutor, who is seeking an opportunity to persecute you with horrible barbarity. Listen always to the voice of Jesus Christ, that Divine Pastor, who has poured out His Blood to save His sheep. He Himself, will lead you to pleasant and fertile pastures, where you will ever find a delicious nourishment which will preserve you in perfect health.

This adorable Redeemer is the Way that you must follow, the Truth in whom you must believe, and the Life that you must hope for. Never forsake Him ; do not lose Him from sight a single moment ; for if you depart from the way which he has marked out you will meet with a dismal death, which will for ever separate you from your Sovereign Good, and draw upon you eternal anguish.

“Fly, therefore, from Error ; listen not to her contagious language ; remain not a single moment near this monster ; your youth and inexperience would run too much risk. Constantly follow the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church. Listen only to, and believe only in, those who obey her laws, and who have one same faith with her Chief, who is the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and who holds his place in your regard. She alone is directed by the Holy Spirit. Out of her bosom there is no salvation.* Remain therefore inviolably attached to her even to your latest breath, if you wish to reign in the kingdom of your Celestial Father. There is only one Faith, and it is to the Catholic Church that this faith has been confided by the

* This of course is not to be understood of those Christians who are in invincible ignorance, and who would be willing to submit their reason to the mysteries of Faith, if only they were acquainted with them.—
TRANSLATOR.

Incarnate Word, the Founder and Master of this Church. To her alone has been given the power of causing the divine flame to shine with all its brilliancy, before the eyes of faithful and docile souls. Apart from her we experience nothing but a darkness as distressing as that of the Egyptians; apart from her we hear only falsehood, we meet with precipices, we bring upon ourselves terrible misfortunes for time and eternity. The sole depository of the precious treasure of Holy Writ and tradition, to her alone belongs the right of giving to the Sacred Books an interpretation just and conformable to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, who enlightens and will continue to enlighten her even to the end of the world. All the faithful should unreservedly submit themselves to her infallible decisions. Private judgment and private interpretation may lead to error, but she is infallible. Listen, therefore, to her alone, and avoid most carefully all who are opposed to her. In believing all that this holy Church teaches, and by accomplishing all that she commands, you will walk in the way which will assuredly lead you to the 'Palace of True Happiness.'"

Truth had scarcely finished speaking, when Error, who was swiftly advancing, came near to Sophia and Eulalie. She was already preparing to

make a display of her false visions and revelations in order to seduce these young persons ; but as soon as she perceived Truth, a secret horror seized her, she trembled with fear which she could not moderate ; she grew pale with terror. The majestic looks of this daughter of Heaven were as a thunderbolt to her. She was crushed and could not endure her presence. This odious woman, who always avoids the light and loves darkness, was compelled to depart and hide her shame in the sombre dungeon of Falsehood.

Sophia and Eulalie never grew weary of admiring and thanking the Goodness of the tenderest, best of Fathers, who had so powerfully assisted them to vanquish all the powers of Hell. Truth having concluded her instructions, ascended to the Eternal, by whom she had been sent. As a pledge of her continual presence, she filled the souls of the two companions with a supernatural light which guided their steps to the end of their journey.

CHAPTER XXIV.

VIGILANCE PRESERVES SOPHIA AND EULALIE FROM THE SNARES OF SELF-LOVE AND VAIN-GLORY.

SEEING that they were delivered from Error, Sophia and Eulalie congratulated themselves upon having, by the grace of God, avoided the snares of this terrible enemy. They were beginning to breathe a little more freely after so many combats ; but Vigilance, who never deserted them, warned them that they had not yet endured all the violent attacks with which the Demon had resolved to assail them.

“ Watch always,” she said to them, “ and with more attention than ever. Do not think of repose ; one moment’s inaction will cause you to lose the fruit of the labour of a long resistance. If you cease to fight one single instant, you will in all probability be speedily vanquished.” They soon understood the utility of this advice ; for they saw coming towards them the adversary most to be feared, and whom it is most difficult to triumph over ; this was Self-Love. His gait was haughty, and clearly indicated the passion by which he was possessed. He was accompanied by Vain-Glory, who is his most intimate friend, or rather, his

cherished sister. They confide to each other their secrets ; they communicate to each other their thoughts, and they act by the same motives. Pride, who is their father, has carefully tended and educated them. He has inspired them with a part of his sentiments, and it is he who guides them in all their actions. Perfectly docile to his lessons, they walk in his footsteps and faithfully fulfil his commands.

Vain-Glory is so infatuated with her own ideas, so extremely prejudiced in her own favour, so blinded by the good opinion which she has of herself, that she attributes all the good which is done, to herself. If we were to believe her, every good success is the fruit of her labours ; it is she who has conducted all, directed all, consummated all ; and without her, nothing would have succeeded. If on the contrary some accidents happen, and affairs do not prosper, it is because she has not been consulted ; by her counsel such misfortunes would have been avoided. • Thus this woman is inflated with imaginary merit ; she is ever occupied with her pretended qualities, ever glorying and boasting of the lights which she has not, of talents which she does not possess, of wisdom which she has not acquired, and of virtuous actions which she is not capable of performing. By this

continual praising of herself she becomes insupportable to all right minded persons ; all such hold her in sovereign contempt. Vigilance advised her pupils never to listen to this woman whose conversation is so much to be dreaded, since she teaches those who are weak enough to listen to her, to look upon all the good they have as coming from themselves, yea, she even persuades them that celestial gifts are their own.

While Vigilance was making known to her disciples the pernicious character of Vain-Glory, Self-Love, the greatest of all flatterers, approached Sophia and Eulalie. He walked near them for some time in order to be seen, and also that he might seize the most favourable opportunity of perverting them. He is more enterprising, more subtle, more insinuating, more agreeable than his sister. Adorned with ornaments which do not belong to him, he regards himself with complacency, is fond of hearing himself spoken of, adroitly applauds himself and his actions, and admires himself in everything. He is so pleasant in appearance, his manners are so affable, that even the most spiritual are frequently taken in his snares without perceiving it.

Our young travellers saw nothing in this person to make them afraid, since he appeared to be so

polite, agreeable, and affable. They therefore believed that they ought not to mistrust him ; but Vigilance made known to them his true character, showed them how much he is to be feared, and how dangerous it is to give heed to him. " You are not afraid of this person," said she, " nor am I astonished at this. There is naturally such an intimate connection between him and yourselves, that without a particular grace from the Lord, you could not be preserved from his snares. He insinuates himself everywhere with an almost imperceptible delicacy ; he is found in conversations ; he accompanies souls in the world ; he flies with them into solitude ; he troubles them in prayer ; he pursues them to the foot of the Altar ; he even glides with them into the tribunal of reconciliation. He accommodates himself to the character and condition of everyone ; no man upon earth is exempt from his attacks. He knows how to hide himself with the greatest dexterity ; often a person is entirely possessed by him, while he believes himself far removed from him. He has not, alas ! more faithful friends than those who glory in despising him. Fly, therefore, from him with more horror than you would from a serpent ; for if you listen even for a moment to his discourse, he will become so completely master of your souls, that afterwards

you will have the greatest difficulty to shake off his yoke. Allow me to show you all the craft and subtlety he uses to seduce you. See how he regulates his exterior; he changes his countenance every moment. Sometimes he is proud and arrogant, at others cringing and servile; then again he imitates the gravity of Prudence. Here he is clothed with the poor and tattered garb of Humility; there he is adorned with the veil of Modesty. To-day, covered with ashes and clothed in sackcloth, he counterfeits the sighs and tears of Contrition; to-morrow, he presents himself with all the candour of Simplicity. Sometimes, he appears as sincere as Truth; at others, he affects all the exterior of Purity. Look at those who follow him, and examine how far he deceives them, and in what manner he causes their ruin.

“One declares himself to be the most miserable of men; he recognises in himself an infinity of imperfections and defects; but he would be greatly displeased and vexed if anyone took him at his word. Self-Love makes him speak in this manner, to draw upon himself the praise of others for his supposed good qualities. Another extols indeed the virtues of his brethren; but in the most agreeable picture which he draws of them, he will be sure always to add something, which, far from

setting off the colours of the picture, serves only to tarnish its beauty. With the assistance of these dark shades, his Self-Love bursts forth, triumphs, and establishes its own merit on the ruins of the merit of others. This one practises good works, and desires that people should publish them ; he cares not what they cost him, if only he is applauded. That one appears to renounce his own judgment, and to submit himself voluntarily to the orders of superiors, however painful ; but it is Self-Love which moves him to conduct himself thus, in order that he may receive the honour due to Obedience. The Worldling passes several hours at her toilet, to enhance the fragile attractions of a perishable beauty ; the False-Devotee neglects herself, in order that it may be seen that she despises all these frivolous things. It is Self-Love which still guides both, in ways so opposed to each other. I should never conclude, my dear children," added Vigilance, " if I was to relate to you in detail all the craft of Self-Love. It will be sufficient for me to say that he changes the most salutary remedies into poison, and that by his contagious touch he transforms vices into virtues."

Vigilance was still speaking, when Self-Love drew near to our pious Companions. He endeavoured to glide into their hearts, and by simulated praises

sought to rob them of the fruit of their labours. "What fortitude you possess," said he to them in a sweet tone of voice, "and how much courage you have shown! Your constancy astonishes me and fills me with delight. How could we expect to find so pure a zeal and such lively ardour, at so tender an age? Your virtue is sufficient to cause the most perfect to envy you; and I know not if any can be found competent to follow you. You are speedily approaching the most sublime degree of sanctity. The rapid progress you have made in so short a time, is a proof of the truth of my words."

This discourse so far removed from the sentiments of humility with which our travellers were inspired, filled them with horror. They closed their ears to the words of this seducer, and would no longer listen to him. On the contrary, they annihilated themselves in the presence of the Lord; they confessed that they were only misery, nothingness, and sin. They acknowledged that if they had any good in them, it was the gift of God and His work. This conviction and this sincere avowal of their unworthiness and weakness, disconcerted Self-Love; he was completely dismayed and covered with confusion.

Vain-Glory, seeing the projects of her brother

subverted, took care not to advance ; she dared not expose her pride to such contempt. They therefore both remained in sullen silence. Vigilance, who knew that these enemies, although vanquished and crushed, were still greatly to be feared, advised her Disciples to fly promptly from them. They joyfully obeyed her wise counsels ; and, according as they were farther removed from these perfidious persons, they were more grounded in humility, that virtue which is the foundation and support of all the others.

CHAPTER XXV.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE EXPERIENCE SPIRITUAL DRYNESS.

THE Lord, who was pleased thus to make perfect the virtue of His servants, permitted them to experience another kind of trial. After their encounter with Self-Love, their road became extremely painful. Fervour disappeared, and they no longer enjoyed her presence. The Divine Sun of Justice hid His rays from them ; they no longer perceived His brilliant light. They no longer heard the voice of their Beloved, and His sweet accents did not now sen-

sibly touch their hearts. It appeared to them that the fire of sacred love was entirely extinguished in their souls. They were delivered up to an overwhelming sadness, and plunged in dreadful desolation. Surrounded with darkness, they walked in fear and trembling, without knowing whither their steps led them. Seized with terror, they feared to be lost, and they were tempted to believe that they had wandered from the Way of Salvation, without hope of ever refinding it. They imagined every moment that they heard the trumpet of the Sovereign Judge, calling them before His terrible tribunal. They persuaded themselves into the belief that this inexorable Judge was irritated against them, that He rejected them and turned a deaf ear to their groanings. These sad thoughts filled their souls with trouble and desolation. Their hearts in this inexpressible dryness and aridity, found consolation only in the abundance of tears which flowed down their cheeks. While this ocean of sorrows inundated them on every side, the demon, to augment their pain, sent two very dangerous persons against them, whose names are Excessive-Fear and Discouragement. These two importunate persons unremittingly pursued them, and did not leave them a moment's repose. Excessive-Fear endeavoured to extinguish within them all confi-

dence in the Lord, and represented this Tender Father as an un pitying tyrant. Discouragement urged them to forsake a way in which they found so much sadness and weariness. He exaggerated the difficulty of resisting so many torments ; he discovered to them all their feebleness ; but carefully hid from them the supernatural strength which sustained them.

In this extremity, Vigilance was the only guide who remained with them. She omitted nothing calculated to render their fidelity constant. She exhorted them to remain immovable in the midst of this violent storm, and to bear with faith and submission the trial by which it pleased God to prove their virtue. She told them that it was in adversities and afflictions that divine love is fortified, and that it was at such times that a purer and more perfect sacrifice was offered to the King of Kings.


Sophia and Eulalie, obedient to these instructions, did not allow themselves to be shaken by the tempest. They despised the Demon and all his temptations, and courageously rose above the repugnance of nature. They thankfully received these precious drops, distilled from the chalice of bitterness, which their Saviour had drunk to the very last drop. They amorously embraced the

Cross, and desired to be nailed to it and die upon it. When Excessive-Fear persecuted them most vigorously, they made most lively acts of confidence in God. They constantly said with Jesus Christ : "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." They also frequently cried out : "Lord, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." "Still more, O my Saviour, still more sufferings, provided you give us more patience and more love." Thus, the more efforts Excessive-Fear made to snatch them from the arms of their Tender Father, the deeper they plunged into the bosom of His Infinite Mercies. The more Discouragement urged them to quit the laborious way in which Providence had placed them, the more they hastened to run after their Well-Beloved. They did not ask Him to remove them from this painful road ; they were determined to walk in it as long as it pleased Him. The Lord, in order to purify their intention, hid from them the ardour with which they sought Him. They thought they were proceeding with criminal slowness ; they accused themselves of negligence, tepidity, and sloth ; they even reproached themselves with being as cold as ice towards so liberal a Master ; nevertheless, in spite of this loathing and weariness which they felt in the service of God, they amassed immense treasures of merits.

Their Divine Spouse was pleased with their constancy. However, to render their love more worthy of Him, He left them for some time in this way, in which nature groans, but grace triumphs ; where nature is enfeebled, but the interior spirit takes new strength ; where the afflicted soul thinks she is doing nothing for her Creator, but where she offers to Him sacrifices of infinite worth. Deprived of all sensible consolations, our travellers never forsook Vigilance. This prudent lady always warned them in time, of the snares and dangers which threatened them. She showed them the pit-falls which the Demon was endeavouring in all haste to dig under their feet, and through her salutary lessons she prevented them from falling therein. In spite of the vain terrors which Discouragement excited in their souls, these fervent lovers of Calvary constantly kept their eyes fixed on the Palace of True Happiness, ardently desiring to arrive thither. Their prayers and desires were not long left unrewarded ; for, they soon found themselves in the way which leads to this happy abode.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WISDOM INTRODUCES SOPHIA AND EULALIE INTO
THE PALACE OF VIRTUES.

HILE Sophia and Eulalie, all bathed in tears, were elevating their souls to the contemplation of the abode of the blessed ; the God, who there manifests His glory, suddenly dissipated the darkness which surrounded them. A beneficent light enlightened them on every side. Discouragement and Excessive-Fear fled away ; Fervour suddenly reappeared and chased away all languor and weariness from the hearts of the young Companions. The amiable Fervour lent them wings and made them fly with her to Wisdom, who was waiting for them to enrich them with her gifts. They soon arrived near to this excellent Virtue, who filled them with a sweet joy. They stopped to contemplate with admiration her ravishing countenance and listen to her words. A ray of supreme majesty reposed on her brow. The Most High spoke by her mouth, and all those who have the happiness of following her, she leads direct to God. She commenced by inspiring her Disciples with a great horror of sin, and an extreme fear of displeasing the Lord. For this purpose, she first

placed them for some time under the direction of a venerable person called, Fear of God. Then she presented them to Divine Love that he might enkindle in their hearts his vivifying flames.

By the assistance of Grace, Counsel, Vigilance, Fervour, and Holy Desire, Sophia and Eulalie had obtained that tenderness of conscience which is alarmed at the least fault, and which cannot endure the least stain. Therefore, Wisdom, that lady for ever worthy of the deepest respect and veneration, received them with unequalled goodness and condescension, and desired to take upon herself the care of conducting them.

This well-beloved daughter of the Lord caused them to walk in a new way, where everything breathes peace. A celestial light shone in their hearts, and guided all their steps by its silvery brightness. A fire full of attractions dilated their souls ; a delicious odour charmed their senses. Their defeated enemies could now scarcely hurt them ; the more our travellers advanced the farther they were from the reach of the arrows of their foes ; they were no longer obliged to fight unceasingly, as they had heretofore ; they travelled without fear in the footsteps of Wisdom. This chaste virgin conducted them in a short time to the Palace of Virtues. She opened for them its ex-

terior gate ; as their Guide, she entered first, and they found themselves in a magnificent garden. An infinite variety of plants formed a charming picture, which they could not behold without astonishment. This land of benediction produces at all seasons fruits, whose beauty enchants and fills with delight. An agreeable freshness was here felt, and the beautiful verdure was pleasant to the sight ; many of these lovely spots, decked with thousands of flowers, seemed to invite our travellers to take repose, which made them forget past labours, and repaired the fatigues they had endured. Large trees, the tops of which seemed to reach to the clouds, procured a pleasant shade. A spring of living waters, which was distributed into little rivulets, watered this land and filled it with fruitfulness and abundance. The air was pure and serene ; a celestial light shone all around, and tranquil and ineffable pleasures were tasted there ! Since Wisdom desired only the good of her new Disciples, she allowed them to gaze upon the beauty of this place so worthy of admiration. Sophia and Eulalie joyfully made use of this permission ; they examined everything with the most serious attention.

The first objects which met their view were some young children playing with Innocence, who was

crowning them with flowers which Candour had presented to them. In another place, in a grove where lilies grew in profusion, they saw a company of Virgins, who were entertaining each other in a touching manner on the infinite perfections of their chaste Spouse. They congratulated each other upon the happiness they enjoyed of living under His laws, and of being attached to Him with such amiable bonds. They formed a melodious concert, in which the praises of the Lamb without spot resounded. A little farther on, in a summer-house crowned with roses, they perceived a company of fervent persons whose souls were consumed by the ardent flames of Charity, and who sang in chorus a canticle of love in honour of the thrice Holy God. After having gone a few steps further, our Companions saw in a solitary thicket, which the violet perfumed with its sweet odour, several penitent souls united together, who joined their sighs to the low moaning of the zephyrs, and who poured forth abundant tears of compunction and sorrow. They discovered others walking in the garden, who were being instructed by a very venerable lady ; this lady is called Pious Reading. She taught them many holy and divine things. Her Disciples, in leaving her, were all delighted with her conversation, and begged permission from her

to return again soon to take more lessons. At a short distance from these they remarked some young people of both sexes, who had long entertainments with a venerable old man called Progress. This wise Master earnestly solicited them to advance in the Way of Holy Love. "Do not stop," said he to them, "labour manfully ; march on constantly ; Divine Love calls you ; run after him ; fly to his arms. When you are intimately united to him, and are become one with him, then I will permit you to repose in his bosom. But in order to arrive at this desirable happiness, hasten to follow him, and increase in virtue day by day." Such earnest words made strong impressions on the hearts of those who heard them ; they excited in them a noble desire of tending to the highest perfection, and a holy emulation of arriving at that sublime union which is the sovereign felicity of the soul.

While Sophia and Eulalie were listening attentively to the pathetic discourse of Progress, they saw another company pass by, not less interesting than those they were admiring. They were persons of every age, sex, and condition, who were conversing with a young man whose nobility is as old as the world. This person was altogether spiritual, and he united with the experience of old age

all the charms of youth. He persuaded all his pupils to bear with patience, and even with joy, the pains and labours of their pilgrimage. He kept his gaze fixed upon the holy City, and continually pushed forward towards that happy abode for which he sighed. His eyes were animated with a divine fire ; his words were so many inflamed arrows which ascended even to the Throne of the Eternal. " O Palace of True Happiness !" he cried out, " O beautiful Heaven, where dwells the only Object of all my desires, where this God of Majesty manifests His glory, and where He inebriates His favourites with a torrent of delights, when shall I enjoy the inestimable happiness of dwelling in Thy Tabernacles ? O my Well-Beloved, when shall I possess Thee ? Without Thee I languish, I think only of Thee ; my heart unceasingly springs forth towards Thee, in the desire it has to be united to Thee ! O Death, my dear friend, when wilt thou break the bonds which still retain me on earth ? O who will give me the wings of the Dove, to fly away into the bosom of my God ? O Love ! Love ! come, consummate my martyrdom by consuming me for Him whom I have always loved ! Hasten then to give me death that I may commence to live : open for me a free passage that I may quit my exile and happily lose myself in my Sovereign

Good." These words were accompanied with so many sweet sighs and tender affections, that it was enchanting to hear them. They made the most lively impression on Sophia and Eulalie. They could not refrain from following this incomparable person (whose name is Desire of Heaven), who taught them in a most efficacious manner to despise all perishable things, and to desire only those that are eternal. In astonishment at so many marvellous things, they asked Vigilance, who was always near them, if all these holy persons dwelt here, and if they had no other abode? She answered that "all those whom they saw were inhabitants of the Palace of Virtues, into which they themselves were soon to enter. They come from time to time," she added, "to refresh themselves in the gardens of Wisdom; but they soon return home to labour at their perfection."

Vigilance, in order to instruct her Pupils still more, showed them Prudence, who took care to moderate the vivacity of youth, taught the more advanced in age to conduct themselves according to proper rules, and reanimated the languor of the old. Vigilance also pointed out Temperance, who prepares the way for Mortification; Justice, who establishes souls in piety; and Fortitude, who animates them with courage to bear every trial and

overcome every obstacle which is opposed to their salvation. So many rare beauties inspired the young Companions with a great desire to penetrate into the Palace of Virtues. They thought, and rightly, that if the exterior presented so much beauty, the interior would be still more delightful. All that they saw and heard enhanced the flattering idea they had formed of this Divine Palace. Therefore they begged their Guides to introduce them into this sojourn of sublime Virtues; their request was immediately granted. Their eagerness was too praiseworthy for any one to reproach them with it; God Himself, witness of it and pleased with their desires, hastened to fulfil them.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WISDOM INDUCES SOPHIA AND EULALIE TO ENTER
INTO THE SERVICE OF DIVINE LOVE.



WISDOM, desiring to hasten the entrance of the pious Companions into the Palace of Virtues, of which they had only yet seen the exterior, took them by the hand and led them into an agreeable solitude, where all was innocence and peace, and where they listened to the voice of the Lord in respectful silence. Upon enter-

ing, they heard some one giving vent to profound sighs, and they were astonished that any one could feel sad in this enchanting place. But after having gone a few steps farther, they saw Divine Love, who was tenderly complaining that he could find no one disposed to receive any of the flames with which he was consumed. "A sacred fire," said he, "burns and devours me; my heart superabounds with love; I languish with the desire of finding faithful souls who wish to love the God who has won my heart; but no one presents himself. All men fly from me, despise me, reject me. A vivifying torrent issues from my breast, ready to flow into the hearts of men; but these foolish ones allow it to be poured out uselessly without even desiring to gather the least drop. Ah! if anyone desires to love the Sovereign Beauty, let him come to me, I will wound him, and will inebriate him with a torrent of delights. Let him open his heart, and I will fill it with celestial flames! if he will allow himself to be consumed by them, he will taste ineffable pleasures. I will dilate his heart, I will extend it, enlarge it, so that in containing more fire he may experience more sweetness; for the more he loves, the more lively shall be his joy. No, nothing is comparable to the happiness of a soul that ardently burns with love for the infinitely

perfect God." While Love was expressing himself in this manner, several hearts that had been wounded by him came to solace him in his pain. As they approached, Love cast upon them a gracious smile, which made him appear still more amiable.

Sophia and Eulalie remarked that among those who came, there were some to whom Love gave a more favourable reception than to others. These had been more faithful to him, and had made a more generous sacrifice of their too natural and sensible affections. Therefore, to recompense their courage, Love bestowed more caresses upon them ; he increased their flames, and took care to purify them still more. Our Companions saw these blessed ones plunge with transports of joy into the bosom of Love ; being lost in this immense ocean, they willingly exposed themselves to all the arrows with which he was pleased to pierce them, they joyfully offered themselves to the sword which was to immolate them to the God who is the inexhaustible source from whence Love draws all his treasures. These hearts, so tender and yet so magnanimous, were well calculated to console Holy Love ; thus he found in them his repose and his delight. But among those who came to render him homage, some there were, whom he corrected with salutary reproaches. These latter still clung to earth, and

could not resolve to break all their chains. Love, displeased with their want of generosity, threatened to abandon them if they would not give themselves entirely to God. Several derived profit from this wise lesson. They laid at the feet of Holy Love all that was imperfect in their sentiments: They wept and groaned at the remembrance of their infidelities, and promised to be more obedient and fervent for the future. Love received these proofs of their repentance, and assisted them to overcome the repugnances of nature. The cords which attached them to him he bound tighter, and filled them with great strength to enable them to shake off the yoke of human satisfactions which endeavoured to retain them. These hearts, therefore, speedily sacrificed all the vain objects to which they had been attached, and became to Love a subject of great consolation. But alas! it was not so with all. Many would not suffer the wholesome rigours of Love. They were irritated at his reprimands; they revolted against his laws; they disdained his benefits; they deserted his service to live under the painful and shameful slavery of Profane Love. What an affliction for Divine Love! What a new motive of sorrow! Alas! he could not refrain from shedding tears when he saw these ungrateful hearts of whom he had taken so

much care, depart and fly from him with all possible speed. "Ah ! my God," he cried out, "Beauty incomprehensible, Beauty most amiable, men refuse to love Thee ! Thou hast created them for Thyself ; Thou hast made them sensible to love, in order that they might employ all the affections of their souls on Thee ; but behold they exhausted all their love and tenderness on perishable creatures ! What shall I do, O my All ! Shall I hasten to run after these foolish creatures ? Shall I again endeavour to move them to love Thee ? Alas ! my pains would be useless ; they despise my words ; they will repel all my endeavours. O monsters of ingratitude ! that sacred fire which the Celestial Spouse came to enkindle on the earth, that all might be set on fire with these holy flames, will be almost entirely concentrated, shut up in my bosom, and in the bosom of God, who is its source."

Love was going to continue his complaints ; but Wisdom interrupted him by presenting Sophia and Eulalie to him as faithful subjects, who had come to submit themselves to his service. He received them with a pleasure so sincere, that it is impossible to describe it. The clouds of sadness which had covered his face, gave place to a smiling serenity. He immediately took some golden arrows with which he wounded the hearts of Sophia and Eulalie.

They were no sooner pierced with these sacred darts than they fell at the feet of Holy Love in an ecstasy of joy. They remained for some time out of themselves ; but at length returning to consciousness, they implored Love to wound them again. They kissed the hand that wounded them, with transports of love ; and in the ardour which animated them, they cried out with sweetest consolation, " O how amiable are the wounds of Divine Love ! O how many attractions has the languor he causes ! Charming wounds, vivifying torment, you are our delights ! O Holy Love, how enrapturing is thy presence ! deign to be always our guide and support. May we act only by thee, live only for thee, breathe only for thee, and may we die in thy arms entirely consumed with thy pure flames."

Divine Love was pleased with their petition. He presented to them some chains which he himself had wrought with admirable taste and beauty. He invited them to allow themselves to be bound with these chains, and he assured them that they would constitute their happiness. The fervent Companions immediately presented their hands ; they were chained by Holy Love, and commenced to run after him. As they followed him, they felt their souls inundated with chaste pleasures. Their hearts were detached from all created objects, and

they no longer sighed for anything but their Creator. They burned with ardent love for the Spouse of Virgins, and desired only to please Him in everything; they asked Love what they must do to please their Lord, and he promised to teach them all the means of acquiring that inward beauty which so efficaciously touches the Heart of the Celestial Spouse. "I will lead you," he said to them, "from virtue to virtue, and will conduct you through all the degrees of perfection, even to an intimate union with that Adorable Object, who is the soul's highest felicity in this life, and the most delicious foretaste of eternal glory."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PURITY OF INTENTION EXAMINES SOPHIA AND EULALIE.

SOPHIA and Eulalie, conducted by Divine Love, and accompanied by Wisdom, Fervour, and Vigilance, came to the interior gate of the Palace of Virtues. Love opened it, and introduced his new victims. The first person whom they saw at the entrance of this dwelling was Purity of Intention. She stopped them in the passage to take time to examine their dispositions,

and to reform their imperfections. She searched the inmost depths of their hearts, and showed them several defects which had altogether escaped their notice.

Sophia and Eulalie, covered with confusion in presence of this beautiful virtue, dared not raise their eyes, but kept them fixed upon the ground. Purity of Intention reproved them for it. She told them that the shame they felt was the effect of secret pride which is always grieved when obliged to recognise its miseries ; she commanded them to look her in the face. They tremblingly obeyed, and their terror increased through the great light with which they were at that moment surrounded. Being enlightened with this light, they were enabled to penetrate the inmost depths of their hearts. How great was their regret upon beholding themselves so miserable, and upon discovering in themselves so much vanity, self-love, and purely natural affections. The more attentively they examined themselves, the more clearly they perceived that their desires had never been sufficiently pure ; that in all their actions there had always been some mixture of self-will, self-seeking and human attachments. They were inconsolable at having preserved in themselves so many stains, so many deformities which were displeasing to God.

But Purity of Intention, after having made known to Sophia and Eulalie their imperfections, wished at the same time to apply a remedy. She probed the depths of their hearts, and scrupulously examined the source from whence came that mixture of affections, which divided their hearts. She saw that until now they had sought their own satisfaction more than the interests of God. She showed how hurtful this almost imperceptible division was to their perfection, and how injurious it is to God. She placed them in the happy disposition of henceforth desiring in all things only the glory of God, and the accomplishment of His adorable will. For this purpose she dissipated all the illusions of their spirits, and rooted from their hearts the self-love which removed them from their Sovereign Good. She inspired them with a total forgetfulness of self and all creatures, so as to be henceforth solely occupied with the Creator. She taught them to seek after, and love only the God of all consolation, and not the consolations of God. "Have always God in view," she said to them; "go straight to Him, without ever stopping to consider earthly objects. Practise good, because it pleases God; flee from evil, because it is the enemy of God. Aspire to perfection, simply to obey the voice of God who calls you to it. Serve God alone,

love God alone, desire God alone. Let no creature find a place in the heart which God desires to possess entirely. Let this God of Love see nothing in you which can prevent that intimate union He desires to contract with you. The more God sees you empty of creatures, and of self, the more closely He will unite Himself to you."

After this short discourse, Purity of Intention, in order to prove Sophia and Eulalie, ordered them to break their close friendship, "lest," said she, "it may be a little contrary to the purity of your love for God." However severe this order might be, our young pupils submitted to it without reasoning. There and then, without the least feeling of vexation, they gave each other the kiss of peace previous to separating, and having no more any connexion with each other in this world. Sophia said to Eulalie, "My only friend, and so worthy of being so, for God's sake I willingly leave you for a time, in order that I may see you again with God for all eternity." "And I," answered her dear companion, "depart from you without regret, because I wish to have no attachment on earth, and because I am resolved to seek God alone in all things, to belong entirely to Him, and to love Him alone." They were embracing each other with the greatest joy, ready to depart and consecrate themselves entirely to

their Well-Beloved : but Purity of Intention, satisfied with their submission and generosity towards the Lord, permitted them to remain together. She commanded them only that they should be united together for the sole purpose of mutually exciting each other to virtue, and of animating each other to walk with greater fervour in the Way of Salvation.

“Never have,” said she, “any human respect for each other capable of turning you away from your duties. On the contrary, warn each other of your defects, and assist each other to correct and destroy them.”

She required of them to promise to be always ready to sacrifice their union whenever they believed it to be the good pleasure of God. She told them also that Divine Love, whom at the present time they found so amiable, because he caused them to experience so much sweetness, had nevertheless his rigours. She asked them if they would seek him as much when he offered them nothing but heavy crosses. Sophia answered that “the rigours of Love would be her joy, and the sufferings to which he exposed them, her riches.” Eulalie said “that she desired to love God for Himself alone, and that therefore she should receive with pleasure all that came to her from Him.”

"But," said Purity of Intention again, "if Love was to present you with nothing but pains and sorrows—if with him you tasted only bitterness and afflictions—if he strewed your way with briars and thorns—if, in fine, you were sure that he would thus treat you all your lives, would you always follow him with equal satisfaction? Would you not discontinue to walk after him?"

"No," said Sophia, "I would never abandon Love—I would follow him to Calvary to be crucified with him, and to share his rudest torments."

"Yes," answered little Eulalie, with a firm and assured tone, "I would joyfully and ardently ascend the cross with my Good Saviour, and would descend only with Him. Let Him pierce me with His nails, let Him make me drink every day of the Chalice of His Passion, I will conform myself to it with all my heart, because it is my Divine Spouse Himself and His Will alone that I love."

"But," continued Purity of Intention, "if Love was to tell you that you would equally work out your salvation, either by passing all the time of your pilgrimage in spiritual sweetness and satisfactions, or by suffering most excruciating pains in soul and body; with this difference, however, that in this way so painful to nature, you would testify more love for your Well-Beloved, and that you would be

more agreeable to Him, what should you do in this case? Search your hearts well, be sincere, hide nothing from me, which of these two should you choose?" They both answered with noble boldness—"We should choose the latter, for all our consolation consists in accomplishing in all things that which is most pleasing to the Lord. The cross has become our inheritance, since Jesus Christ has taken it for His portion, and has died upon it for us in the midst of most cruel torments."

Purity of Intention, pleased with their dispositions, recommended them to persevere in them, and to be strengthened in them each day more and more.

The young virgins prostrated themselves before this perfect lady, and with clasped hands promised her that they would never cease to watch over all their actions and affections, and to act in all things with the only view of obeying and pleasing their Divine Spouse. Purity of Intention, after having received proofs of their gratitude and assurances of their submission, recommended them to continue their way in the gardens and the Palace of Virtues, under the direction of their venerable guides.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE VISIT HUMILITY.

THEY commenced by directing their steps towards the dwelling of Holy Humility. The door was opened for them by a very venerable lady, whose name is Knowledge of Self. She saluted them without looking at them; for this person, so little known, never looks at any but herself; she never busies herself with others except for their spiritual good. She unceasingly examines and carefully searches the inmost recesses of her heart; she perceives her least defects, and despises none but herself. Thus she is so loved by Humility, that she is always near her and never leaves her. Those who fly from Knowledge of Self can never arrive at Humility. On the contrary, it is sufficient to be a friend of this good lady, to be speedily and intimately united to Holy Humility. Wisdom, knowing how estimable Knowledge of Self is, and how advantageous for souls is her conversation, asked her to be pleased to entertain herself with her pupils. She begged her to dispose them to appear before that rare Virtue who preserves all the others. The modest lady yielded without difficulty to the request of Wisdom.

Sophia and Eulalie were admitted into a private apartment, where the intimate friend of Humility commenced to give them lessons. All the words of this venerable lady were as so many rays of light which penetrated the inmost depths of their hearts; they then saw all their misery and feebleness clearly discovered. Sophia perceived unveiled all the disorders of her life, and Eulalie all her imperfections. Although they were already purified from all their stains, they recognised that it was a pure effect of Grace, and that they had not merited so great a favour. They could not but acknowledge that all the good in them came from the Father of Mercies, and that in themselves there was only a miserable inclination for evil. Astonished and confused, they began to abase themselves before God, and confess themselves unworthy to live among the number of His servants. The more Knowledge of Self spoke to them, the more she increased in their souls the humble sentiment of their baseness and nothingness. When she saw them in this laudable disposition, she immediately took them by the hand, and led them straight to Humility. In approaching this excellent person they felt the most perfect esteem for her, and presented themselves before her with profoundest veneration.

Humility was covered with a long mantle of a dark colour. Upon her head she wore a veil which covered her whole face. She was prostrate at the feet of the Eternal, rendering to Him most worthy homage. This simple exterior announced nothing great; anyone might have taken this lady for an ordinary pious person. She speaks little, and always fears to cause herself to be looked upon. It is always in spite of herself that her beauty is discovered, and that the holy works she performs are known. But Wisdom, who perfectly knows her, is pleased to publish her praises, and to cause her to be admired and loved by the souls she directs. Therefore, for the benefit of her new pupils, she raised a little the mantle which covered Humility without her perceiving it, she was so entirely occupied with the entertainment she held with the Most High. Sophia and Eulalie saw that she did not touch the ground. The more she abased herself before God, the more she was elevated towards Him. The Lord, for the instruction of the young travellers, took up Humility, like another Elias, in a chariot of fire. The two companions had the consolation of following her with their eyes. Already they were beginning to lose her from sight, when, in a transport of admiration, they cried out—"O Humility, O precious Virtue,

O happy favourite of Heaven, must you abandon us at the very moment we are beginning to profit by your lessons and examples?" But what was their astonishment to find Humility so near them, that they were able to consider her with attention? She appeared to them still more beautiful and charming. Wisdom took advantage of her ecstasy to point out to her disciples all the attractions she possesses.

"See," she said to them, "my dear children, how pleasing Humility is to the Lord; what power she has over His Heart, and with what inestimable graces He favours her. She annihilates herself in His presence, and this God of goodness draws her entirely to Him; He makes her repose on His bosom; He overwhelms her with His benefits; He honours her with his sweetest caresses. She entirely forgets herself; she is plunged in the idea of her baseness; she joyfully confesses that she is nothing, and that she can do nothing without the assistance of the Lord, and the Lord manifests Himself to her with complacency; He enlightens her with His light; He clothes her with His strength; He inflames her with His love. Examine with what confidence she fixes her eyes on God, how she listens to the adorable words He addresses to her, and how she speaks to Him with holy fami-

liarity. She shuns the esteem and praise of men, and angels sing her merit and her glory. She holds in horror the vain honours and dignities of the world, and God prepares for her the highest places in His kingdom. Already she approaches near His throne, and all those who appear before Him without this mother, this guardian of virtues, shall be for ever banished from His sight.

“See,” continued Wisdom, “see Pride and Ambition chained to her feet, and Demons tremble in her presence. One look from her, one word from her mouth, one sigh from her heart—the least of her actions, disconcerts the Prince of Darkness and precipitates him into the eternal fires. He cannot endure her, because wherever she is found, there he has no power. On the contrary, God, by the love He has for her, gives His grace abundantly to those who submit themselves to her laws, but He constantly resists the proud who despise her. The Saviour found her attractions so powerful, that He chose her for His faithful companion during His mortal life. He has always been with her from His Conception to His Glorious Ascension. He has her still fixed near Him to dwell with her, even to the consummation of the world, in the august Sacrament of the Altar.”

“But,” said Sophia, “permit me, Divine Wis-

dom, to ask you why this holy lady is always solitary? It is certain that, if she showed herself in the world, people could not refrain from loving her, and following after her."

"You are deceived," answered Wisdom; "the world is blinded; it detests that which it does not understand, and blasphemes that which condemns it. The foolish world despises Humility; it turns her into ridicule. The prudence of her conduct appears folly to the world, and it looks upon the disciples of this estimable virtue as people of little wit. Nevertheless, it is not for this reason that Humility flies from the world; for she hides her merits from good people as well as from the wicked.

"Although she is so great a lover of retreat, she does not refuse to appear in public when the glory of God, or the salvation of her neighbour, require it. She then joyfully suffers the insults and opprobrium of the wicked; but she takes no vain pleasure in the praises which the just bestow upon her. If solitude has for her so many charms, it is because she ever fears that others should see the immense benefits with which the Lord has favoured her. She abhors the applause of men, and desires to be seen by God alone. You have doubtless observed how carefully she endeavours to obscure the lively

light which surrounds her. Perfectly empty of self, she is filled with singular graces, and, in spite of herself, this interior beauty sometimes appears exteriorly. Under this poor mantle which covers her you may see the magnificent robe with which the Most High has Himself adorned her; it is called Heavenly Glory. The Holy Spirit dwells in her heart as in a cherished sanctuary, and overwhelms her with His gifts."

At this moment Humility returned from her ecstasy, and cast her eyes upon her virtuous companion, who had for so long a time been occupied in contemplating her. They did not make known to her that they had been witnesses of her elevation, lest they should afflict her. She ever believes herself less than nothing, and the only thing that gives her pain is to learn that someone esteems her.

Wisdom, in the name of Sophia and Eulalie, begged Humility to speak a few words for their edification, and which might be useful for ruling their conduct in the future. She did so willingly, with that noble simplicity which is natural to her.

"Continually bear in mind," she said to them, "and deeply engrave in your hearts those words of the Incarnate Word—'Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.' (Matt. ii. 29.) When God

Himself speaks in this manner, who can refrain from imitating Him? But when to His words He joins His example, how eagerly ought we to follow Him! Look upon your amiable Saviour, taking the form and nature of a slave, being born in a stable, living in indigence, suffering the contempt, insults, and affronts of an ungrateful nation, dying as a malefactor between two thieves; and even now, in the Sacrament of the Altar, hiding His glory beneath the sacramental species. At the sight of these humiliations of the God-Man, annihilate yourself in His presence, remember that you are dust and ashes, nothing but sin and misery, and that there is no good in you, except it comes from God. With such thoughts as these, you will attribute to yourself none of the virtues you are enabled to practise. Give all the glory to the Lord; for all is due to Him—you have no part in it, except a faithful correspondence to His grace. Take care that you never discover to the eyes of the world, the particular benefits and favours the Eternal bestows upon you. If you make a display of these inestimable treasures, they will be sure to be taken from you, and you will lose the fruit of them.

“But it is very little for the creature to humble himself before the Creator; you must also sincerely abase yourself before men, always choose the lowest

place, recognise that abyss of misery and corruption which is within you, suffer disdain and opprobrium with peace, and even with joy, and really believe that you deserve a thousand times more. "If," she added, "you do this, you will live here below the life of grace, and make yourselves worthy to live in heaven the life of glory which God has prepared for the meek and humble of heart."

This discourse of Humility delighted Sophia and Eulalie. They wished she had not concluded her discourse so soon. They thanked her for her valuable instructions, and promised to put them in practice. They immediately felt this inestimable Virtue insinuating herself in their souls. At the same time they had a lively idea of their own unworthiness, so that henceforth they could scarcely understand how anyone could dwell upon thoughts of vain-glory. They longed for humiliations and contempt. They confessed themselves unworthy of the least favour of the Lord, and they were greatly astonished that He had admitted them into this Palace, where they had the happiness of conversing with the most sublime Virtues. Such were their happy dispositions when they took leave of Humility; the words of this tender lover of the Crucified were deeply engraven in their hearts, so that they never forgot them.

CHAPTER XXX.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE ENTER THE APARTMENT OF
PERFECT CONTRITION.

NEAR the abode of Humility is another which appears rather mournful. The door is placed between two rocks. In one there is a natural cavern, or kind of grotto ; and from the other issues a spring of living waters which forms a fountain, so clear that one can see oneself therein as in a mirror. This fountain is separated by an iron grill, so that it serves equally for those within and those without. Wisdom permitted Sophia and Eulalie to look for a moment at this grotto, which received light only through its entrance. The two companions perceived a young girl all in tears. Her dishevelled hair and vehement sorrow had not diminished her graceful appearance. She was covered with sackcloth, and armed with a discipline. She was kneeling before a large cross hewn out of the rock. She struck her shoulders vigorously with the discipline, and ceased not to cry out, " O the mercy, the infinite mercy of God !" Sophia and Eulalie were deeply moved at this touching spectacle. They returned to Divine Love, and asked him who this illustrious penitent

was. He answered, "that she was a very good and very holy girl, but that she was not the most perfect of all. Her name is Attrition. She is not my most intimate friend ; she is at most only bound to me by a feeble bond. When she shall have washed and purified herself in that fountain, she will be whiter and more worthy of my favours. The slight bond which unites us will be strengthened, and changed into chains that cannot be broken without difficulty. But, my dear children, although this Virtue is excellent, and that it is by the grace of the Holy Spirit that this compunction is excited in her heart, do not stop to consider her, still less to become one of her disciples. Follow me, and come and pay your homage to her sister, who is much more noble, more majestic, more enlightened, more ardent, more divine ; it is better to attach yourselves to her for ever." Vigilance immediately departed to open the two folding doors, and Divine Love introduced Sophia and Eulalie to Perfect Contrition.

Before answering, Fervour pointed out to Sophia and Eulalie a small door which was near the fountain which has been spoken of, and she said to them : " This door belongs to a very small room, situated in the thickness of this wall. It is lighted only by two openings one foot and a quarter square, covered with wooden trellis-work. You can now

see one of these windows, and the other is on the side of the apartment of Perfect Contrition. It is in this obscure place that Counsel often retires. This room is so narrow that there is only space for himself, and even so he is not very comfortable. But he gives his audiences, which are very long, only through this wooden trellis. Each one comes in his turn; for he has only one at a time. On certain days of the week he is overwhelmed with the concourse of people. The Pupils of Contrition are very faithful to come; those of Attrition are not so exact. Among these latter, several only approach at long intervals. All address themselves in secret to Counsel, to unveil to him their interior, to ask his advice and his benediction, and to beg him to heal their spiritual maladies. This venerable old man, invested with authority from on High, after having heard them with patience and charity, reproves their defects, urges them to correct the same, imposes a salutary penance upon them, instructs them, blesses them, and applies to them, by means of that sacred fountain, the infinite merits of Jesus Christ."

"Suffer me, dear lady," said the young and innocent Eulalie, "suffer me to present myself to this worthy Minister of the Lord, from whom I have already received so many inestimable benefits. You know that Purity of Intention, and Knowledge

of Self have discovered in me a great number of faults and imperfections. I fear that if I appear before Perfect Contrition with a conscience so defiled, she will chase me from her presence, or at least that she will not look upon me with a favourable eye. Therefore, permit me to go and discharge myself in presence of my venerable Benefactor, of the heavy burden of my iniquities."

"Fear not, my child," answered Fervour, with a smiling and agreeable countenance, you and your Companion will meet with a gracious reception. You are with Holy Love, he is the inseparable friend of Contrition ; if ever he should leave her, to dwell with her sister Attrition, this latter would then become Perfect Contrition, while Perfect Contrition would in this case henceforth be only Attrition."

"O my good lady, how could so marvellous, so surprising a change take place?" cried out this admirable child.

"This would be," replied Fervour, "a prodigy of Love ; and who can undertake to explain the marvels which Love operates in souls ? God alone can conceive them, and they on whom He bestows the gift of understanding them. But, my child, Love awaits us, he calls us ; let us not delay to run to him !"

There was nothing dazzling or brilliant in the

dwelling of Perfect Contrition ; everything, at first, appeared revolting. Our companions heard nothing but sighs, and saw only instruments of penance. It appeared as if the people of this place ate their bread after having dipped it in bitterness. Nevertheless they no sooner entered than they experienced a profound peace and supernatural consolation. The happy inhabitants of this asylum experience a secret tranquillity which overwhelms them with joy. They entertain themselves almost continually, with five persons who are much loved by God ; they are called Penance, Austerity, Fasting, Alms-deeds, and Prayer. In spite of their mortified appearance, they are very pleasant and agreeable. No sooner is any one acquainted with them, than he forgets all that formerly made them appear repulsive to nature.

Sophia and Eulalie, through the influence of Love, had the happiness of being admitted to their edifying conversation. They found them so amiable that they could not resolve to leave them a single moment. "O my God !" they cried out, "how delightful is Thy service, since its very rigours are vanquishing charms, which triumph so gloriously over hearts that desire to love Thee." Love rejoiced that his pupils had contracted so strong a friendship with these holy persons ; but anxious to make them advance in the way of virtue, and de-

sirous of making known to them the whole beauty of Perfect Contrition, he showed them this illustrious lady, for whom he has such a singular affection. He recommended them to listen attentively to her words, and carefully to examine her movements. She was humbly prostrate before the Divine Majesty. She held in her hand a crucifix, which she kissed with amorous tenderness. She fixed her eyes on this adorable image, and watered it with her tears. She sent up to heaven the most tender sighs, and said to her Saviour, with a voice capable of melting the hardest rocks : " I see Thee, Divine Redeemer, all bruised with blows, exhausted and faint with loss of blood, Thy head crowned with thorns, Thy hands and feet pierced with nails. Who has reduced Thee to this pitiable state? Thou answerest me, sin. O, then, what a horrible monster sin is! O abominable sin! how many pains thou hast cost my Jesus! Thou hast emptied His veins of every drop of blood; thou hast torn His innocent flesh, and hast most cruelly mangled Him! Thou hast nailed Him to that Cross! thou hast caused Him to expire on that infamous gibbet. O my sweet Saviour, is it possible that every mortal sin renews all the sufferings of Thy Passion, and that so many ungrateful ones every day render themselves guilty of it! O infinite patience of my

God ! O inflexible hard-heartedness of the sinner !” At these words her sobs stifled her voice ; tears flowed from her eyes in abundance. Then, sighing, she added : “ O my Lord, there are but few who are sensible to my complaints ! A multitude of Christians reckon sin as nothing ; they often blindly live in it, yea, all their lives, so hard are their hearts. Some, it is true, are grieved at seeing themselves stained with sin ; but they grieve only on account of the chastisements it merits. But why, therefore, is not the love and gratitude they owe to Thee the cause of their sorrow ? O mercenary hearts, do you then serve your God only through interest or fear ? Learn now to lose it for ever ; hope, indeed, for the good things He promises you, nothing is more just and salutary ; but let Love also make an impression upon you. Fear sin more than all possible evils, because it is sovereignly displeasing to God, and because it outrages His goodness, and all His other Perfections.”

The words of Perfect Contrition filled the souls of Sophia and Eulalie with a lively sorrow for having offended the Lord, not only for the shame of having committed sin, or for the fear of punishment ; but because the Lord is Sovereignly Amiable and Infinitely Good. Holy Love, seeing them in this happy disposition, told them to approach Per-

fect Contrition. He then requested this lady to lay her right hand upon the hearts of his pupils ; she did so at once, for all the Virtues obey Divine Love. She had no sooner touched them than their hearts were broken by the vehemence of their sorrow. One might have thought that their breasts would burst through the violence of their sobs and groans. Then Love placed all their sins before their eyes. He gave them to understand the greatness of them ; he made known to them all the circumstances of these sins ; he discovered to them the different degrees of their malice. This afflicting sight filled Eulalie with horror not less than Sophia. Nevertheless, they were not discouraged ; for Love sustained them and fortified them in a marvellous manner. They mixed their tears with those of Perfect Contrition ; they united their sobs to her sighs. In proportion to the manner in which they gave proof to God of their sorrow for having offended Him, Love communicated his flames to them with profusion. The more they were inflamed with this divine fire, the more sensible and vehement was their repentance. They wept with tenderness and compunction. But lest the bitter sorrow with which they were seized should overwhelm them, Love called a holy lady, whose name is Confidence in God, that by her presence they

might be filled with celestial consolations. She immediately appeared. The serenity of her countenance clearly indicated the interior peace she enjoyed. The sweetness of her voice, the unction of her words, establish the soul in inexpressible tranquillity; she banishes all servile fear, and changes the most cruel pains into pleasures. She approached the two Disciples of Divine Love, and opened her arms to them; she drew them to her bosom with most loving condescension; she caused them to experience in their hearts all the sentiments which animated her own. "Hope in God," she said to them, "for He is your Creator, your Saviour, and your Father. Though your crimes should be in number as the sands by the sea shore, be assured that the Lord will pardon them; for His mercy is infinite." She then spoke to them of His immense benefits in so touching a manner, that they were rapt in admiration, and feared nothing more than to be wanting in love for the God of Infinite Clemency.

"My God," said Sophia, "how horrible sin appears when Divine Love shows to us its deformity! How keen is the pain we feel for having committed it, when Love makes known to us the injury it does to God."

"Yes," continued Eulalie, "how sweet it is to

weep, when Love causes the tears to flow ! What happiness is greater than to embrace the feet of a Father always ready to receive us into His friendship and favour ! Who would not love a Father who loves us so much, and who, in spite of our infidelities, never ceases to give us the most sensible proofs of His love ?”

Perfect Contrition then presented to the young Disciples the Crucifix which she held in her hand, and requested them to kiss it. They fixed their lips to the sacred wounds with transports of love, and testified their gratitude to their Saviour in the most fervent manner. A grave person, named Good Resolution, came to interrupt for a few moments their affectionate colloquies. He told them in a striking tone, “that it was not sufficient to detest sin, and to testify to God their sorrow for having offended Him ; but that they must join to this sorrow a firm and sincere determination of never relapsing into their former faults.” He spoke with so much vehemence of the danger of falling again into sin, that Sophia and Eulalie were seized with terror in considering their feebleness and fragility ; but Confidence in God reassured them, and told them that the Lord would support them, and fill them with His grace. Then Good Resolution inspired them with so firm a determination of never

again displeasing their Sovereign Master, that they were resolved rather to die than evermore commit one single mortal sin. Holy Love also persuaded them to prefer every imaginable evil to the misery of being stained with even a venial sin. "O," he cried out, "how pleasing to God is such a disposition."

Scarcely had Good Resolution securely established in their hearts a sincere hatred of sin, than they saw coming to them a very virtuous lady, whose name was Fly from Dangerous Occasions. She appeared serious, modest, and very mortified. She congratulated them on their pious sentiments, and warned them that their resolutions would not be lasting if they did not avoid all occasions of falling into sin. "The Most High," she said to Eulalie, "has preserved you from all the snares which were laid to entrap your innocence, cease not to thank Him for so signal a favour ; and you, Sophia, you have quitted the world and its vain pleasures, never return to it again ; your only safety is in flight. Remember these words of the Holy Spirit : 'He that loveth danger, shall perish therein.' (Eccl. iii. 27.) Therefore, flee from the world and its pleasures, from the world, for it is full of scandals ; it is the persecutor of virtue and the protector of vice. Fly from the wicked ; if you frequent their com-

pany, you will become like to them. Fly even from imperfect and prattling devotees ; for in their society you will only find tepidity, pride, and delusion. In fine, fly from everything which does not lead to God ; this will be the means of meriting more and more his choicest gifts and favours."

After this salutary advice, Perfect Contrition said to Sophia and Eulalie, " You ought not to leave this place without going to speak to a venerable old man, who will order you to wash in that fountain which you perceived on entering. This fountain is used by all my Disciples, and those of my sister Attrition."

Our two Companions were eager to obey. The young Eulalie, who had ardently desired to see Counsel, was the first to cast herself at his feet. She declared to him with sincere tears of Contrition the numerous imperfections which Purity of Intention, Knowledge of Self, and Holy Love had found in her. Sophia followed her, and accused herself of her infidelities with not less sincere marks of repentance than her Companion. This zealous Minister of the Most High saw with great satisfaction the rapid progress which these young souls had made in the Way of Salvation. He, however, prudently hid from them the immense treasures of grace which they possessed, and which he so ad-

mired ; but told them they had still a great deal to do in order to arrive at true perfection. He encouraged them to persevere, and preserved them in the sentiments of true humility. He exhorted them to live under the laws of Holy Obedience, and to practise daily the exercises of Mental Prayer, Recollection, and Union with God. He permitted them to approach the Altar frequently, there to receive the God of Love, who is thus pleased to give Himself entirely to His creatures. He imposed upon them some penitential works, to which they submitted with profound respect. In fine, he recommended them to plunge into the sacred fountain ; but how great was their surprise ! As they came out of these miraculous waters, their clothes appeared whiter than snow, their spirits were enlightened with a lively light, and their hearts were enkindled with the flames of Charity. Having returned from their astonishment, and being in an ecstasy of delight through such inestimable happiness, they prostrated themselves before Contrition, and earnestly begged her not to abandon them. To which this Virtue kindly answered : “ I will receive you, my dear children, among the number of my most intimate friends, and will be ever with you. Promise me also, that whenever you fall into some little fault, you will come here to be

purified in these vivifying waters." These wise Virgins most joyfully made this promise, and testified to her all their gratitude for the sentiments of compunction which she had excited in their souls, and also for the abundant and consoling tears she had caused them to pour forth. They also thanked Confidence in God, Fly from Dangerous Occasions, and Good Resolution, for the important services they had rendered to them. Then Love and Fervour unfolded their wings, and invited the two Companions to follow them. They immediately began to do so with the greatest pleasure and delight.,

CHAPTER XXXI.

DIVINE LOVE PLACES SOPHIA AND EULALIE UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF HOLY OBEDIENCE.



ALMOST in a moment the fervent companions arrived at the apartment of Holy Obedience. In this sacred asylum the Will of God rules with sovereign dominion, and Divine Love commands as King and absolute Master. This dwelling is a secure retreat for timid Virtue. She is here carefully preserved by Holy Renunciation and Abandonment to the Good Plea-

sure of God. These illustrious persons are incorruptible, and constantly keep guard at the entrance of this happy abode. All who desire to enter, they unmercifully despoil of all self-will, all attachment to their own opinions, and make them silence the murmurs of rebellious nature, which always revolts against the laws of Holy Obedience. Holy Renunciation has in appearance something so austere, so severe, and even so harsh in his exterior, in his manners, and in his conduct, that he inspired Sophia and Eulalie with terror. Love perceived it, and rather sharply reprimanded them for it. He declared to them that he was going to leave them in the hands of him whom they feared, so that he might destroy in them all that was imperfect. Then he commanded Fervour to retire; she did so instantly. Love then became invisible, so that the young Companions no longer enjoyed the presence of him who had procured them so much pleasure. Their pains were extremely great. They knew not to what they ought to attribute this sudden change; they accused themselves of having offended Love, and of having, by their revolts, forced him to separate from them. "Divine Love," they cried out, "return, return; we will be more obedient to you. We cannot live without you; your absence has left us in a languor so oppressive that it will cause our

death. Love, Love, will you be insensible to our tears? Will you not listen to our sighs? Speak, command, we are your slaves, ready to sacrifice a thousand lives in order to obey you!" Love was moved by their tender sighs; but he appeared insensible to them. They were still continuing their sorrowful complaints, when Wisdom said to them:—

"Cease to afflict yourselves, you offend Love by this; you believe he is far from you, but he is near to you, yea in the midst of you. It is Love who is going to act in you by Holy Renunciation. The time has come in which he is resolved to make you feel his rigours. For a long time he has bestowed upon you his sweetnesses; is it not then just that he should prove your fidelity by causing you to pass through the crucible of trial and suffering? You must submit to his orders; this is the sacrifice he requires of you; this is the only means of speedily enjoying his sensible presence." Sophia and Eulalie yielded to the salutary advice of Wisdom, and Confidence in God having reassured them, they peaceably awaited the commands of Love.

Then Holy Renunciation advanced towards them, armed with the sacred sword which Divine Love had confided to him. He struck their hearts in a most sensible manner, and gave a mortal wound to their

Self-Will ; he then exterminated from their souls without pity all the desires which were not entirely submitted to the Will of God. Nature desired to complain ; she gave vent to a few groans ; she even endeavoured to revolt, but Wisdom imposed silence upon her. She was compelled to be silent, and dared no longer trouble the secret operations of Love. Holy Renunciation, finding now no obstacles, finished his work in peace. He became so completely master of their wills, their hearts, and all the powers of their souls, that God alone acted in them with absolute sovereignty, as well in temporal as in spiritual things. He detached them from all creatures, and made them so die to themselves, that they no longer sought satisfaction in anything. He went still further ; he placed them in such a holy indifference for all interior delights, for all the singular favours the Lord grants to souls when it pleases Him, that they were in the happy disposition of receiving with equal tranquillity bitterness or sweetness, crosses or consolations. In fine, he taught them never to seek themselves in anything, to renounce themselves unceasingly in all things, so that by this mystic death (which is indeed true life), they might obtain the inestimable gift of subduing nature that grace may triumph.

Then it was that Sophia and Eulalie could under-

stand the sublime language of Abandonment to the Good Pleasure of God. Holy Abandonment frequently told them to cast themselves entirely and cheerfully into the hands of God, to desire only what He desires, to will only what He wills, to love only what He loves, and to find their repose, their peace, their joy, in depending absolutely on His Goodness, Providence, and Power. He required that they should be ready for God's sake to sacrifice their relatives, friends, goods, honour, health, yea, life itself, if such was God's good pleasure; moreover he desired that they should willingly consent to behold Holy Love no more, nor ever again to experience his sweetnesses, if God so willed it. The fervent Companions yielded to all, and answered "that they were resolved to accomplish whatever the Lord required of them, and were ready to renounce everything which was not conformable to His adorable designs."

After this sincere avowal of Sophia and Eulalie, the two persons who, by the order of Love, had just exterminated their self-will, conducted them to Holy Obedience. This admirable Virtue asked them if they wished to become as babes, who allow themselves to be led without disquietude, and with perfect docility. She declared to them that the Most High had ordered her to form in them so

docile a spirit, and a heart so submissive, that they might never oppose the least resistance to the operations of Divine Love. Sophia and Eulalie assured her "that they would deliver themselves with all their hearts into her hands, so that she might dispose of them as she thought proper." Then Obedience regulated the distribution of their time in such a manner, that every moment was employed in exercising their submission.

Divine Love was not yet satisfied. As he desired to make his pupils perfect, he sent them to Mortification. This new mistress taught them to repress all their senses by refraining from looking at, listening to, or saying anything that could stain the purity of their souls. She exercised them in watchings, fastings, works of mercy and charity, and other penitential labours. Above all, she applied herself to establish them in the abnegation of self-will, and to teach them to crucify the flesh and their disorderly passions. For this purpose she continually mortified their desires; she refused them the slightest satisfactions, whenever she perceived them attached to these things, though ever so little. If she perceived that something gave them a too sensible pleasure, she immediately prohibited them to use it. When she heard them complain of the long absence of Love and Fervour, she

severely reproved them for it, and ordered them to ask God to prolong this absence, if such was His Holy Will.

Obedience often commanded Mortification to separate the Companions, and to forbid them to have any communication with each other. At other times she came to call them to some painful labour, and compelled them to apply themselves to it when they wished to be spending this time in meditation. Again, when they were disposed to work, she would order them to pray. Sometimes she employed them in occupations purely exterior, because they wished to enjoy the repose of retreat. She required them to accomplish with promptitude and joy these different duties, in all things loving only, and seeing only, God. When Nature, who always desires liberty, endeavoured to revolt and make Sophia and her companion feel the commands of Obedience too rigorous, this holy lady thus spoke to them:—"The Eternal Word, who for your salvation has been obedient even to the death of the Cross, desires you to imitate Him ; you should therefore execute with pleasure whatever I require of you." Immediately these docile children would yield to this salutary advice, and their repugnance ceased at once; observing the laws of Obedience, they enjoyed profound peace. But this severe

Virtue, in order that they might learn to die entirely to self, and also to teach them to submit to all kinds of persons for God's sake, by the order of Love, conducted them to two very troublesome persons, called Caprice and Impetuosity. She commanded the two Companions to submit to these persons in everything which was not contrary to the Divine Law ; she also told them to repay their bad treatment with the charms of sweetness and patience. It is not possible to express what they had to endure at the hands of these two persons.

Caprice continually ordered them to do the most singular and ridiculous things. He was never satisfied with the manner in which his orders were executed. Obedience, on her part, forbade them either to murmur, or complain, or excuse themselves. On the contrary, she desired them to appear cheerful and contented.

Impetuosity, at the least thing which displeased him, became excessively furious ; he overwhelmed them with injurious words ; sometimes he even maltreated them. Obedience obliged her pupils to suffer his anger and violence in humble silence, or if they spoke, to do so in a very respectful manner.

There was also in this place a very importunate woman, called Contradiction, who not a little tried

the virtue of the two Companions. She opposed all their designs ; she took whatever they said in bad part ; her sole pleasure was to trouble their repose ; she tormented them without relaxation ; she gave them no time to breathe. Obedience required them to comply with the tyrannical desires of this woman also, and likewise desired them to take her cruel proceedings in good part. Sophia and Eulalie always accomplished whatever their excellent Mistress required of them ; they never resisted her orders, however mortifying they might be. All this served in a marvellous manner to destroy the empire of Nature, and to stifle all self-will.

Love, seeing them entirely submitted to the good pleasure of God, and beholding with complacency that Holy Obedience reigned in their souls, returned to his Disciples ; he showed himself to them a thousand times more beautiful than they had ever seen him. His eyes, shining with a brilliant light, cast upon them looks of tenderness, which enkindled in their hearts the purest and most lively flames. In the pleasure they experienced at seeing him so full of beauty, they cried out in a transport of joy : “ Where, O Divine Love, hast thou been during all the time in which we did not behold thy beautiful face ? Whither didst thou


go? Why didst thou remain so long absent?" "Do not think," said Love to them, "that I was ever separated from you. I did indeed (in order to prove you) render myself invisible; but I reposed in the inmost depths of your hearts. Although you did not feel my presence, because I had stopped the course of my ineffable delights; still, I was not less your help, your support, and your strength. It was I who excited you in so powerful a manner to submit yourselves to all the commands of Obedience. It was by me that Holy Renunciation triumphed over your self-will. It was I who dictated to the sublime Abandonment all the words that he addressed to you. I heard your sighs, I saw your tears, and I presented them to the Father of Mercies, who received them from my hand as a sweet-smelling sacrifice."

Sophia and Eulalie, penetrated with gratitude for all the cares of Holy Love, in the excess of their joy, cried out, "O, Divine Love, how many are thy attractions! How constant thou art! Who can be insensible to such immense benefits? We place our hearts in thy hands for ever; burn them, consume them, with thy celestial flames. Dispose of us as is pleasing to thee; we deliver ourselves to thy operations without reserve. If thou bestowest thy sweetnesses upon us, we will

receive them with thanksgiving ; if thou makest us experience thy rigours, we shall be still more attached to thee ; for all that comes from thee is good, just, and holy." Love did not suffer himself to be surpassed in generosity ; seeing his Pupils in these dispositions, so necessary for advancing in the paths of the spiritual life, he rewarded their submission by bestowing new favours upon them.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE ARRIVE AT THE PORCH OF
THE TEMPLE OF HOLY PRAYER ; THEY ARE
CONDUCTED TO VOCAL PRAYER.

OPHIA and Eulalie, being led by their virtuous Guides, could not fail to make great progress in the way of perfection. The sacrifices they had made by submitting to Holy Obedience had very much advanced this work. But after having taught them to die to all things, it was time to teach them to live in God. This was the design of love, and it was in order to communicate to them this altogether supernatural and sublime life that he directed their steps towards the august Temple of Prayer.

The door of this religious abode is carefully guarded by Retreat and Silence, who constantly watch to prevent the entrance of Curiosity and Dissipation. These two inconstant girls endeavour every moment to break this barrier and surprise the vigilance of the careful guards. The Disciples of Love were well received in the Porch of this dwelling of the children of God. They gave them a thousand welcomes, and they everywhere met with edifying objects. Retreat told them that, as soon as they were introduced into that sacred asylum, solitude must become their delight. Silence declared to them that all useless entertainments were banished from this pious House. They promised that they would conform exactly to these wise and just rules. Then this venerable old man, who always had his finger on his lips, to remind them that they were not to speak, softly opened the door for them. Sophia and Eulalie had no sooner advanced into this sanctuary of celestial graces than a clear light shone in their eyes. What filled them most with admiration was, that according to the strength with which this light struck their gaze, it insinuated itself into their souls in the same proportion. It, in a supernatural manner, procured them knowledge that elevated their souls to the Lord.

The Temple of Holy Prayer is divided into four Choirs, arranged in four different parts of a rotundo, the dome of which is superbly adorned with sculpture and painting. Under this dome is raised a rich Altar, which is reached by thirty-three steps. This number is mystical, and signifies the thirty-three years which the Saviour lived on earth. These four Choirs are closed unto a certain height, so that one Choir cannot perceive what is passing in the other. Nevertheless, from all the four Choirs they can see the Altar upon which the most august Sacrifice is offered.

The young Companions, examining this distribution, asked their Guide in a low voice if it was possible to see in one day all the beauties of this divine place. "No," answered Love, "it may be that even several years would not suffice. You must proceed by degrees," he added; "your sight is still too feeble to gaze upon those resplendent stars that are in the most remote Choir, which is in front of you, behind that veil which hides it from sight: you could not now support the brilliancy of those stars. As you cannot yet understand all the prodigies which the Most High has resolved to discover to you, it is necessary that you should pass through the first Choir, and that you should remain some time in the second, to receive all the lessons

of which you have need." They answered Love by a total abandonment of themselves to all his desires. He immediately bade them advance towards a very venerable lady, whose name is Vocal Prayer. They found her humbly prostrate at the feet of the Eternal, to whom she offered the pure incense of her homage and prayers.

This holy lady gathered around her a multitude of fervent Christians. She taught them how to render a tribute of praise to their Creator in a worthy manner. Sophia and Eulalie saw these angels of earth join interior worship to the exterior. Some sung in alternate choirs the infinite mercies of the Lord ; others borrowed from books dictated by the Holy Spirit, the sentiments and affections which they addressed to their Sovereign Master. Others, again, recited with zeal and attention canticles of thanksgiving which they knew by heart. Sometimes they adored the Holy Trinity ; sometimes, kneeling before an image of the divine Mary, they testified to her their respect, confidence, and love. They often addressed themselves to the Blessed in Heaven, as mediators and intercessors, to carry their prayers and vows to the foot of the Throne of the Supreme Majesty. All those favoured by Vocal Prayer appear in a holy recollection. A lively faith, a firm hope, and a continual

fervour, animated their words ; thus they offered to God a sacrifice which He received with complacency, and which He rewarded with His most abundant benedictions.

Sophia and Eulalie united their voices to those of these faithful servants. After having acquitted themselves of this essential duty, and having promised to visit Vocal Prayer every day, Divine Love led them into the second choir, which was at their left hand.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE VISIT MEDITATION.

SOPHIA and Eulalie, guided by Love, entered into the retreat of a very holy lady, whose lessons are most useful in making known the Will of the Lord ; her name is Meditation. They found her kneeling before a crucifix, which she took into her hands from time to time, embracing it with tender affection. Her eyes were fixed upon this sacred image ; she appeared absorbed in profound reflection, and entirely occupied with God, who was the object of all her desires. She remained immovable, without articulating a single word. She frequently gave vent to

amorous sighs, which came from the depths of her heart and rapidly ascended to the Palace of True Happiness. By the different expressions of her countenance, it was easy to perceive that great marvels were being operated in her soul. Sophia and Eulalie dared not interrupt her in her entertainment with her Well-Beloved; but Wisdom, whose every law Meditation obeys, called her by her name. Wisdom then told her that it was the Will of the Most High that she should leave her prayer to instruct these children, whom she now confided to her care. At the same moment, Meditation opened her eyes, and saw with pleasure these Pupils of Wisdom and Love about to become also her Disciples. She ran to them, tenderly embraced them, and promised to instruct them with all diligence, provided that they on their part would be submissive and docile.

In order that they might be made ready to receive her lessons with profit, she presented them to a very grave and modest lady, called Preparation. This pious person taught them to banish at once from their minds all voluntary distractions and all vain solicitude concerning exterior things. Delivered from these troublesome cares, Sophia and Eulalie experienced an admirable liberty. Then Preparation told them to prostrate themselves

before the Supreme Majesty, to adore Him with their whole hearts, and to elevate themselves to Him by a sweet remembrance of His holy presence. She invited them also to implore the light of the Holy Spirit, and earnestly to beg of Him to give them grace to correspond faithfully with His holy inspirations. She reminded them also to implore the assistance of the most glorious Virgin, their Angel Guardian, and the Saints to whom they had a particular devotion, to obtain by their intercession grace to understand what it should please God to make known to them through the instructions of Meditation. The young Companions most punctually and faithfully accomplished all that Preparation had directed them to do.

Love, seeing them thus disposed, requested them to listen to Meditation, and to come every day to entertain themselves with her. He recommended them to submit themselves to her superior lights, to correct themselves of the defects she remarked in them, and to practise all the good works she counselled. The two Companions, in all sincerity, promised to do all this, and then approached this eminent lady. By her side they saw Faith all radiant with glory. A sacred veil covered her face ; but the faithful soul, by the assistance of Meditation, penetrates the veil, and discovers her

celestial beauty ! This favour was granted to Sophia and Eulalie. They had humble, docile hearts, detached from everything, and purified by Love ; therefore, Faith held before their eyes the lamp which she had in her right hand. With the assistance of this light, they quitted earth, and were raised to the bosom of the Divinity.

Meditation, assisting their imagination, caused them to reflect upon the admirable and holy truths which Faith taught them. These two illustrious ladies concurring together, (to the happiness of their new Disciples,) represented to their memory and understanding the sublime maxims of the Religion of Jesus Christ. They commenced by placing before their eyes the judgments of God, the deformity of sin, the injury which it does to the Creator, the eternal pains it merits, and the infinite rewards of which it deprives us. They also drew for them a touching picture of Death with all its horrors, they excited them to think often upon it, to be ever prepared for it, and to detach themselves from everything they would assuredly have to leave behind when Death came. Then to moderate fear by confidence, they were not content to make their Disciples only look upon the justice of the inexorable Judge ; but spoke much of the marvels of His infinite mercy. They called to their minds all the

benefits which the Lord was continually bestowing upon them. Then they laboured to enkindle in the hearts of their Pupils an ardent zeal for their perfection. They recalled to their remembrance all the actions of the Saviour, and all the virtues of which He had given so bright an example. Above all, they never grew weary of reminding them of the love and gratitude they owed to Him. To make their Disciples understand how very far they were removed from this perfect model, they obliged them to enter into themselves and search out all their imperfections and defects. Meditation unveiled the most imperceptible of these, and, aided by Faith, engaged them to exterminate all that could offend the Living God, or displease His awful sanctity. Then she inspired them with so great a desire of avoiding the least faults for love of their adorable Master, that the greatest sacrifices made in testifying to Him their fidelity, cost them nothing. Reflections so salutary and touching did not fail to inflame their wills. When Meditation saw them so filled with zeal for the practice of virtue, she gave a signal, and immediately a number of amiable children appeared, full of ardour, called Desires and Affections.

Sophia and Eulalie received them with inconceivable joy. These children, so beloved by Medi-

tation, insinuating themselves into the hearts of the two Companions, conveyed all their tenderness, and bore up their sighs and petitions to the Palace of True Happiness. When the two faithful friends had entertained themselves a reasonable time with the Desires and Affections, they saw a very interesting woman coming towards them ; it was Resolution. This courageous woman made them recapitulate the lessons which they had just received. She obliged them to promise Almighty God 'to accomplish without delay all that he expected of them. In union with Resolution, the two Pupils vowed to the Lord never to stand still in the paths of Justice ; but to labour unceasingly to destroy in them all that was displeasing to Him, and to acquire all the virtues with which it was His Will to adorn them.

Then a holy person, whose name is Thanksgiving, came to assist them in returning thanks to the Most High for all the lights He had given them, and for all the favours He had granted them. Thanksgiving had brought with him two useful ladies, who are called Offering and Petition. The first taught them to consecrate themselves to God without reserve, and to make a sacrifice to Him of their wills and their whole beings. The second told them to lay humbly before the Lord their miseries,

their feebleness, their wants, and then to beg Him to give them strength, to reanimate their languor, so that they might be able to obey Him in all things until death.

The Desires and Affections always remained near Sophia and Eulalie. They caused them frequently to burst forth into transports of love, and they mixed their accents with those of Resolution, Thanksgiving, Offering, and Petition. These children, so ardent, and so animated with the fire of Divine Love, took care to gather a spiritual nosegay formed of the choicest flowers in the garden of the Spouse of Virgins. A thousand and a thousand times a day they presented this nosegay to Sophia and Eulalie, so that its sweet odour might remind them of the words of life which they had heard in their Mental Prayer. They were accompanied by an admirable young girl, who was all on fire; she is called Ejaculatory Prayer. She frequently furnished the pious Companions with inflamed arrows, which they sent up to the Throne of the Eternal, and which caused a delicious manna to fall upon them.

While Sophia and Eulalie were lending attentive ears to the instructions of Meditation, the Distractions, Cares, and Disquietudes which Preparation had chased away made a great noise at the entrance

of this abode, and disputed with each other as to who should enter first into this divine sanctuary. But the young Companions, obedient to the voice of their God, left these unruly people to fight without listening to them, or answering them a single word. They were careful not to open the door, nor give the slightest attention to their importunity. They were so wrapt in admiration at the touching discourse addressed to them by the Spirit of Truth, that they feared nothing so much as to lose the least word. By this constant fidelity they made themselves every day more worthy of the benefits of the Lord ; and Meditation, with all the holy persons who accompanied her, elevated them more and more towards the august summit of Perfection.

If the application which they gave to the useful lessons of Meditation cost them a little labour, because they were compelled to captivate their memories and understandings, in order to reflect attentively upon the subjects which were proposed to them, this slight pain appeared sweet and very agreeable. Love, who was pleased with their docility, caused them to experience many consolations, and honoured them with caresses so tender that all their labours were changed into pleasures, and they would willingly have passed whole days and nights in

this holy exercise, so great was the joy and consolation their souls experienced therein.

When they quitted Meditation to fulfil their other duties, they retired to Retreat, who enclosed them in a charming solitude where they had only God for the witness of their actions. Silence accompanied them, and assisted them to recall to their memory the solid instructions which they had heard. This salutary remembrance touched them in a lively manner, and furnished them with a thousand acts of love, gratitude, confidence, humility, and submission, by means of which they offered to the Lord a continual sacrifice of prayer and praise. Their fidelity to return every day to Meditation, to reflect upon the truths of Religion, and their constancy in enduring the fatigues of this spiritual labour, sometimes so delicious, but sometimes also exceedingly painful through the drynesses and temptations which accompany this exercise, caused them to make, in a short time, great progress in the Way of Salvation, so that Love deemed them capable of walking in a more sublime path.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LOVE CONDUCTS SOPHIA AND EULALIE TO THE
ABODE OF HOLY RECOLLECTION.

RAYER, who seeks only the glory of God and the salvation of souls, in obedience to the desires of Love, lifted the mysterious veil which hid the third Choir of her Temple from sight. She introduced the two fervent companions therein, and pointed out to them all its beauties. They were filled with admiration upon beholding so many marvels. They remained immovable at the entrance of this Divine Sanctuary, and dared not mix among so many holy persons who dwelt in this place, and who appeared to them as pure as angels. They thought that they already beheld the interior of the Palace of True Happiness, and that they saw themselves surrounded by that brilliant light with which the Lord surrounds the heads of His Elect. They were not altogether deceived; for although all the favours which God bestows here below upon souls who belong entirely to Him, are nothing in comparison to the torrent of pleasures and delights with which He inebriates the Blessed in Heaven, nevertheless, in the abode of Holy Recollection, by a special grace and privilege,

they understand in part the incomprehensible grandeur of eternal glory. The Most High communicates Himself to His favourites in a peculiar manner; He discovers to them His admirable secrets; He bestows upon them pleasures so ineffable that they are a foretaste of celestial delights.

Sophia and Eulalie asked Holy Love who those persons were who appeared so intimately united to the Supreme Beauty. Love, before answering their question, filled them with a lively light, which put them in a state to understand supernatural things more perfectly; he also wounded their hearts with a most penetrating arrow, which increased the sacred flames he had already enkindled. After which, he thus spoke :—

“ You see that Lady entirely surrounded with resplendent rays, which crown her head and are her clothing; she is called Heavenly Light. The Almighty surrounds her whole person with the light of His Majesty; and by the virtue with which He fills her, she in a moment enlightens every place through which she passes. It is by her that the Lord instructs the souls whom He calls to the knowledge of His impenetrable secrets. With one look she dissipates the thickest darkness; she penetrates without difficulty the inmost depths of the

heart. Souls who are happy enough to receive her precious emanations, are with incredible facility elevated to the contemplation of the Divinity. This is her cherished dwelling, because the souls who are introduced here, being delivered from the bondage of sin, are more susceptible of receiving her sweet influences, and she reigns in them with more sovereign sway.

"Look," added he, "at that other lady, whose angelic modesty is admired even by celestial spirits. Recollected, entirely occupied with God, she sees Him alone in all the objects which surround her. She thinks incessantly of Him; He is the only object of her desires. She acts in all things to please Him, and makes to Him a continual offering of her every movement. This holy person is called Remembrance of the Presence of God. Her company is extremely useful to all who desire to advance in virtue, and increase in perfection. They who are always with her, draw upon themselves in a singular manner the favourable eye of the Eternal, and she obtains for them most abundant graces.

"See also," continued Love, "that holy person yonder, whom you cannot admire too much. He unites to the gravity of old age all the vivacity of youth. Look in what manner he keeps his eyes

fixed upon the Palace of True Happiness, and never looks on earth. All wrapt in the loveliness and attractions of the God whom he loves, he looks at Him alone, hears Him alone, feels Him alone. His ardent desires are unceasingly elevated to that ineffable Beauty. He knows only His divine language ; he is touched only by His amiable accents ; all the rest is indifferent to him. All created objects are to him as if they were not ; they pass and repass before him, without his even perceiving them. This rare person participates in the lights of the Cherubim, and in the ardour of the Seraphim. He is all on fire for God, but is indifferent to perishable things ; always attentive to the different motions of grace, but perfectly insensible to everything transitory. Such is Holy Forgetfulness of Sensible Things, whose sentiments I have just described to you. Look at him a thousand times, use every effort to imitate his transports of love ; use every effort to attain the sublimity of his perfection.

“In fine,” said Love, “fix your gaze on that angelic creature whom you perceive completely covered with rays of Heavenly Light. He lends an attentive ear to the words of life which the Holy Spirit addresses to him. His soul is entirely absorbed in the beauty of his God. His heart,

wounded by my arrows, is opened to the holy inspirations which he receives, and which he follows with incredible fidelity. Living wholly in God, it is no longer he who acts ; but it is God who operates in him and by him. The Divine Paraclete Himself forms his thoughts, his movements, and desires ; He reposes in his bosom as in a cherished sanctuary in which He takes His delights. This well-beloved child of the Supreme Being is Holy Recollection. You are henceforth to be conducted by him ; he will direct your affections and produce your sentiments. Delivered from the labour inseparable from Meditation, you will enjoy with this person a delicious peace ; he will teach you to listen to the voice of your God, and will also teach you in what manner you must allow yourselves to be guided by this Good Father. You will no longer have to fatigue yourselves in seeking for so long a time the object of your sighs ; immediately you call Him, He will be present to your hearts ; He will even prevent your desires ; He will show Himself to you with less reserve."

† As soon as Love had ceased speaking, Prayer led Sophia and Eulalie quite close to Heavenly Light, and she so penetrated them with her divine splendour, that she in a moment dissipated the clouds from their souls. She enabled them to understand

the language of the Spirit of Truth, who at that moment desired in a particular manner to be their Master.

Holy Remembrance of the Presence of God inspired them with so profound a respect for this Adorable Being, that they every moment rendered to Him sincere homage ; she taught them to consider God as reposing with complacency in the very depths of their hearts, and showed them how to entertain themselves continually with this Sovereign Beauty by the most lively affections and the most ardent transports of love. This disposed them in a marvellous manner, to receive the intimate communications with which the Lord was pleased to favour them.

Holy Forgetfulness of Sensible Things caused all created objects to disappear from their sight. He covered all exterior things with a salutary veil, so that their vision was no longer obstructed by them, and their spirits, enjoying a sweet liberty, could rise to the contemplation of God and His ineffable perfections.

Thus disposed, Holy Prayer united them by a spiritual bond to Holy Recollection, who taught them in a new, but pleasing manner, to entertain themselves with God. He silenced their imagination ; he checked the efforts of memory ; he caused

a cessation of the labour of the understanding ; he so inflamed their wills that they complied humbly and joyfully with the operations of Grace. Moreover, he established their souls in such perfect and peaceful repose that they were enabled to listen to the voice of God, and hear His adorable words ; yea, the knowledge of the most sublime secrets was given to them. No sooner did this God of Goodness make known to them His designs, and show them clearly what He required of them, than they submitted themselves, without reserve, to all His Will.

O what prodigies does God operate in His faithful servants who are in this happy state ! With what lights He fills their minds ! What pure desires He excites in their hearts ! With what divine life He animates their souls ! He gives them to understand His grandeurs and perfections more perfectly. He commences to discover to them the Majesty of His countenance, and the attractions of His surpassing Beauty and Loveliness. He opens to them His infinite treasures. He gives them light to penetrate, so to say, all the profound depths of His infinite Mercy. Virtue appears to them more charming and beautiful than heretofore ; ah ! how amiable it then seems to them ! what pleasures they enjoy in practising it ! What ardent sighs they send

up to the Palace of True Happiness, and how sincerely they desire to be delivered from the bonds of flesh to be united to their Well-Beloved.

Love, seeing them make such rapid progress in this delightful way, in which he himself had conducted them, poured into their souls without measure that divine fire of which he is the source. They lived henceforth for Love only, and Love himself formed all their affections and desires. Thus, entirely penetrated with the vivifying rays of Heavenly Light, wholly filled with Holy Remembrance of the Presence of God, thoroughly established in Forgetfulness of Sensible Things, and entirely consumed with the chaste flames of Divine Love, the Lord acted so freely and perfectly in these blessed souls that they were like to little infants, allowing themselves to be conducted blindly by a Father full of Goodness.

Holy Recollection forsook them no more ; he continually elevated their minds to God ; he rendered them attentive to the voice of God, and faithful in following all His inspirations. Although Meditation is a most holy lady, whose conversation is very useful to those who have the happiness of enjoying it,—and the frequentation of which cannot be too strongly recommended,—nevertheless, the company of Holy Recollection is infinitely more

agreeable : for the former employs long reasonings to convince the minds of those she instructs, before she is able to touch their hearts ; while the latter penetrates the soul that he conducts with so sweet, so touching an unction, and with such a lively ardour, that she is completely enraptured with it. The soul, through Holy Recollection, sees at a glance, and without difficulty, all that God is pleased to show her, and with the same facility she understands all that He is pleased to make known to her. Thus, Sophia and Eulalie were so delighted with his presence that they could have desired to be always with him. They could not imagine that there was any greater perfection, or truer happiness, than to be near him, and listen with him to the voice of the Celestial Spouse. For this reason they were willing, with the consent of Love, to pass their whole lives under the guidance of this holy person. But God, who willed to pour upon these privileged souls His most signal graces, caused them to advance in paths of justice still more sublime.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE ARE ADMITTED INTO THE
SANCTUARY OF CONTEMPLATION AND UNION
WITH GOD.

PAYER, that excellent Mistress, who so surely and so promptly leads to God the souls who are obedient to her laws, one day, by the order of Holy Love, called Sophia and Eulalie, to introduce them into the last Choir of her Temple. This is a singular grace, granted only to a chosen few ; many desire it, but Prayer rejects them, for, in order to be received, it is absolutely necessary to be called in a special manner. Should any one present himself of his own accord, to enter, it is to be feared he will fall into illusion. For this reason Prayer counsels no one to desire to penetrate into the abodes of Holy Recollection and Contemplation, without a particular vocation ; but she does induce, yea, she presses even the most imperfect, to frequent the company of Meditation, that charitable lady who accommodates herself to every one, and speaks familiarly to all.

The fervent Companions, laden with the precious benefits which Holy Recollection had just so abundantly bestowed upon them, obeyed Prayer imme-

diately, and followed her without delay. But what was their astonishment when they found themselves in a divine Sanctuary, whose marvels infinitely surpassed all that they had hitherto heard or seen ! The rays of the Adorable Sun of Justice shine here with so much vivacity, that all the lights which had already enlightened their souls, were but a feeble glimmer emanating from the celestial light, with which the Eternal Word favours His cherished and well-beloved souls, according to their strength and dispositions. In this blessed abode, the Supreme Being no longer uses any reserve ; He pours into the souls of His elect, light without measure and without limit. By the assistance of this light He discovers to them His Beauty in so clear and distinct a manner, that they are overwhelmed with ecstatic delights.

Love, who desired to prepare his Pupils to experience these sweet effects of Grace, made known to them the excellence of the persons who lived in this place, and gave them the highest idea of their virtue. He told them to consider attentively two ladies who are sisters, and who are inseparably united, the one called Contemplation, and the other Union with God. The first upon whom they gazed was Contemplation. They saw her extremely absorbed, immovable, and insensible to all

that passed around her. She constantly held her eyes fixed on the Palace of True Happiness, and appeared altogether lost, completely absorbed in God. In the sweetness of her rapture, they saw her sometimes lend an attentive ear, as if she was listening to the discourse of some one ; in a moment after, she appeared struck with admiration, and showed an air of astonishment ; by which it was easy to understand the sublimity of her thoughts, the splendour of the lights with which she was favoured, and the magnificence of the gifts which were bestowed upon her. Without knowing or perceiving it, she also manifested the tenderness of her sentiments by certain words which escaped her from time to time. During her ecstatic transports they heard her say : " O Goodness ! O Goodness ! O Mercy ! O Beauty ! O marvellous attractions of the Object I adore, how amiable Thou art ! O Immensity of my God, which surroundeth me on every side, I am lost in Thee ! O Love, what lights thou pourest into my soul ! O Love, with what fires thou consumest my heart ! Thou inebriatest me with a torrent of delights ; thou openest to me all thy treasures, and permittest me to take from them what I will ; thou discoverest to me divine secrets, and communicatest to me ineffable knowledge ! O my Well-Beloved, what return shall I make unto Thee for benefits so great

and rare? I am nothing, Thou art All; supply what is wanting in me, O my God and my All."

Every word that this seraphic person pronounced was as a fiery arrow which pierced the hearts of the young Companions. But that which astonished Sophia and Eulalie more than all, was to see the Most High lay aside as it were His dignity, in order to draw Contemplation more closely to Himself. Then He discovered Himself more perfectly to her, and she received a still greater knowledge of His Infinite Perfections. In these intimate communications, her soul enjoyed a rapturous and divine contentment. Delighted beyond measure with the celestial language her Well-Beloved spoke to her, she could no longer find words to express her transports of love. God Himself dictated her expressions, and arranged her discourse. Her heart spoke only by the abundance of its love; and her Sovereign Good alone was able to read the tender sentiments which He had excited in her soul.

While Sophia and Eulalie were admiring in silence the marvels that God operated in Contemplation, Love told them to lend an attentive ear to the sublime words of Union with God. This holy lady has most intimate relations with Contemplation. It is through her that she has become so

perfect ; it is in listening to her that she has acquired that profound peace, the sweetness of which she calmly enjoys. No one can listen to her testifying her love to God without being moved. The Celestial Intelligences are attentive to her voice, and a thousand times happy are the souls upon whom the Lord bestows the gift of hearing her. "O my God," she cried out, "my Love and my Life ! My Well-Beloved, my All, Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine ! No, I am no longer my own, I find nothing of my own in me, I see only my Well-Beloved ; I hear and feel only my Well-Beloved. O Love, I have now no life ; thou hast taken it from me to make me live in my Supreme Good ! Thou hast taken my heart to give it to my Spouse, and my Divine Spouse has given me His ! Thou hast deprived me of all natural movement and sentiment, so that I may act only by Grace, and that God alone may operate in me. No, I have no need of chains or bonds to attach me to my Sacred Lover, for Love has so bound me to himself ; and our union is so complete, so intimate, that I live only in him and by him ; nor is it possible for me to separate myself from him ! My God has taken me captive, and in this sweet bondage I am truly free ! His thoughts are mine ; His sentiments reign in my heart ; His light enlightens

me ; His intentions direct me ; His voice instructs me. In a word, it is His own life which animates me ! O what happiness ! O what treasures of grace !”

After this angelic creature had thus expressed her transports of love, her raptures and ecstasies were so elevated, that they thought she had already arrived at the Palace of True Happiness, and that she was even now crowned with ineffable glory.

Sophia and Eulalie never grew weary of listening to her ; her discourse overwhelmed them with indescribable joy, they could have passed their whole lives in listening to words so full of Divine Love. But what was their astonishment and admiration, when they saw this holy lover reposing on the Heart of the Celestial Spouse, who looked upon her with complacence, while she enjoyed an ecstatic and delicious sleep, during which He abundantly poured into her soul His most precious gifts ! They perceived also the Sacred Lover, who, as it seemed to them, eagerly profited by the mysterious repose with which He had favoured His spouse, to crown her with flowers which He Himself had carefully cultivated. Their sweet odour delighted every sense, and caused her to enjoy pure and inexpressible pleasures. He nourished her with the excellent fruits that His own hand had planted,

and distilled into her mouth their vivifying liquor. These spiritual meats enraptured all her powers, and captivated them in such a manner that they could no longer act in the ordinary manner. At this time, this blessed soul had no other occupation than to consent to all the operations of her Divine Spouse, to confess sincerely that she had no part in them, and that all that was passing in her was the sole work of the love of her God, although, (yet without her perceiving it,) it was also the work of her will.

Such elevated sights, and such sublime knowledge, enkindled in the hearts of Sophia and Eulalie an ardent desire to arrive at so perfect a state. In their surprise, they ingeniously confessed that they could never have imagined, that God condescended to operate in souls such astonishing marvels. They asked Love if they could one day hope to participate in them, and what they ought to do to obtain this happiness. Holy Love requested Wisdom to answer them, and then disappeared from sight. As they had now learned to suffer in peace the absence of Love, they did not complain, but listened attentively to Wisdom, who spoke to them in the following manner :

“My dear children, after all the favours which you have received from Heaven, you cannot doubt

that God has called you to great perfection. To fulfil His designs and second His intentions, you ought to tend to this perfection with all your strength, without ever being terrified at the sublimity of the paths in which He wills you to walk. It is quite certain, that if all who give themselves to prayer were constantly faithful in following the motions of Grace and all Divine inspirations, they would advance more and more in the way of Virtue. As for you, who have the happiness of being conducted in the Way of Salvation by Love, and of being enlightened with his lights which make known to you these admirable marvels, that an infinite number of others neither see nor understand, you ought to be penetrated with the most lively gratitude towards God, whose Goodness has procured for you so sure a Guide. Come every day, then, to pass some hours with Contemplation and Union with God. The Divine Spouse invites you Himself to enjoy under the shadow of His wings that tranquil peace, that mysterious repose which He reserves for His well-beloved, and which He grants when it pleases Him. But for the present, you must leave promptly this attractive abode in order to be exercised in the knowledge and practice of the Virtues you have still to visit."

Little Eulalie was inconsolable at having to

abandon this delightful dwelling ; she cried out as did St. Peter : “ ‘It is good for us to be here.’ ” (Matt. xvii. 4.) “ Why cannot I remain here always ? Why, adorable Wisdom, do you force us to depart ? ”

Wisdom sweetly reprimanded her for the injustice of her complaints, by representing to her that she ought blindly to obey the Lord. “ If,” said she, “ this tender Father has just caused you to feel His Divine Presence, and to taste in some measure the delights of the Palace of True Happiness, it is to give you strength to enable you to labour and suffer. He bestows a grace upon you, when He takes from you these consoling raptures, at the moment you begin to deliver yourself up to them too much. Delay not then to run to Holy Love, and expect again to experience his rigours.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE FOLLOW DIVINE LOVE, CARRYING THEIR CROSSES WITH THE VIRTUE OF PATIENCE.



T was not to bestow sweetness and consolation upon Sophia and Eulalie, that Love awaited them. He had preceded them with Patience ; and while Wisdom conducted

them to him, he was preparing crosses of every kind for them. Accompanied by Wisdom and Vigilance, they arrived at the door of that holy dwelling which for nature is not very agreeable. At the entrance of this habitation they saw two venerable persons, whose names are Courage and Constancy. Courage told them that "Divine Love was occupied with preparing the crosses which he was about to lay upon them, and that they must dispose themselves to carry them after him with fortitude." Constancy asked them "if they were resolved, without complaining, to be crucified as long as it should please Love? For," she added, "souls that will not suffer, and that are always ready to be detached from the Cross, must not come here. We receive only those who are ready to bear with a good heart to their last breath, all the pains that it may please God to send them. Do not deceive yourselves, you enter here only to endure the keenest pain; here is the crucible in which Love purifies and proves his Disciples. There is no victory without a combat, no recompense without labour, no crown without merit. If you desire to live with Jesus Christ in glory, you must follow Him to Calvary, and drink of the bitter chalice, which He Himself has drunk first."

Wisdom and Vigilance having answered for their

dear Pupils, that they were ready to suffer all for God, Courage opened the door, and Constancy conducted them to Love. They saw him surrounded with crosses of every size and description. "Behold," said he to them, "all that is prepared for you. All these crosses are intended for you, choose now those that you desire to carry."

Sophia answered, "Holy Love, I desire to choose nothing, but will receive from your hands whatever it pleases you to give me."

Eulalie, full of fervour, said to her Companion: "Why should we not choose the heaviest crosses in order to be more agreeable to God, and more like our Adorable Model?"

"Because," answered Sophia, "it is better to carry a light cross given us by God, than to carry a much heavier one chosen by self-love. In making our own choice, we shall please ourselves, and seek our own satisfaction; whereas in abandoning ourselves to the Will of the Lord in all things, we are sure to please Him and obtain His assistance. Moreover, in elevating ourselves so high by presumptuous indiscretion, we should expose ourselves to the danger of falling under the weight of our self-imposed burden. The Most High might permit this, both for our instruction and also to punish us for our rashness. On the

contrary, if we abandon ourselves to God, this tender Father who knows better what is necessary for us than we do ourselves, will either accommodate Himself to our weakness, or give us strength in proportion to what He requires of us. If we are faithful in enduring the first trials, we shall render ourselves worthy to be nailed to the Cross with Jesus Christ, and to die upon it."

Eulalie yielded easily to the solid reasons of Sophia, which were dictated by Wisdom. They both delivered themselves up to Divine Love, that he might dispose of them according to his good pleasure. He was pleased with their sentiments; but in order to make them still more perfect, he made known to them the rare qualities of Patience. He showed them this holy lady exposed to all kinds of pains, sometimes from the world which unceasingly persecuted her, sometimes from the demon who employed every means of tormenting her, that his malice and wickedness could invent, sometimes God Himself tried her in a very sensible manner. In the midst of this ocean of sorrows, she always preserved the same tranquillity. Affability reposed on her forehead; an amiable serenity was ever visible on her whole countenance; there were no emotions in her interior, which she did not immediately suppress with scrupulous care, she

suffered in peace, she suffered with pleasure, she desired to suffer still more. Eulalie asked Love what could communicate to Patience that fortitude which made her so invincible. "Look," answered he, "look upon the Man-God upon the Cross, suffering and dying for the salvation of men. Remember the incomprehensible torments He has endured for you. It is this Man of Sorrows who is the true mirror of Patience; this is the touching sight which sustains this holy lady and gives her strength to walk constantly in the footsteps of the Saviour. Full of lively faith as she is, one look at this Adorable Redeemer makes her pains appear sweet and light. She loves, she desires sufferings, when she considers her God covered with wounds, bathed in His own blood, crowned with thorns, pierced with nails and attached to the infamous Cross. The persecutions of men seem delightful to her, when she sees that innocent Lamb calumniated, outraged, betrayed, sold by one of His own Apostles, blasphemed and treated as a robber by the whole Jewish nation. There is no anguish which does not appear agreeable to her, when she compares it with that which the Divine Jesus has endured for ungrateful sinners. Such are the sentiments which animate Patience, and which make her so full of peace in the midst of adversities and tribulations. She is

•

the beautiful Virtue you must follow in order to be pleasing to God. But that you may suffer like her and with her, come and hear from her own mouth the holy instructions she gives to her Disciples."

Then Love led Sophia and Eulalie near to Patience, who benignly looked upon them. She said to them, at the same time pointing to the Crucifix—"Behold your model! Are you ready to go wherever He wills to lead you?"

"Yes, yes," they answered; "this is our heart's desire."

"Ah, well," continued Patience; "it is to Calvary that He calls you; ascend then with Him; remain there with Him, and never descend except by His orders. The Way of the Cross is a Royal Way; the King of Kings has watered it with His Blood. A Christian, in order to arrive at glory, can go by no other way. The abridgment of perfection is to suffer, without murmuring, for the God who loves us. A soul that suffers nothing, and who will not suffer anything, cannot be a disciple of the Crucified Lord. It is not meet to be a delicate member of a Head crowned with thorns. To suffer for the God we love, and who infinitely loves us, is the sweetest of all pleasures. It is not good to suffer too much, says the world. What! is it possible to love too much? Embrace, then,

the Cross ; attach yourselves to the Cross ; bear it first with submission ; you will then soon embrace it with joy ; you will desire it, and it will become your delight."

Sophia and Eulalie, knowing the need they had of Patience to accomplish the painful journey which Love desired them to undertake, begged her to accompany them. This admirable Virtue eagerly consented. She took with her Meekness, a venerable lady, who was very useful to the two Companions. She filled their hearts with an agreeable sweetness, overwhelmed them with delights, and animated them to bear all without repugnance.

Then Love led them to the foot of a very steep mountain, and asked them if they would ascend with him. They answered "that their only desire was to follow him wherever he went." Satisfied with their dispositions, Love placed a cross on the shoulders of each of them, and commanded them to follow him. They were already preparing to obey, when Love with incredible joy imposed upon himself a very large and heavy cross. He immediately commenced to climb this sacred mountain with lively ardour, joy, and delight. The young pupils were in great astonishment, but they desired to follow him ; they sighed after him, and implored him to give them time to rejoin him. Love heard

their sighs ; but to inflame their zeal, and animate their courage in the Way of the Cross, he redoubled his speed. Sophia and Eulalie, seeing with great pain the distance between themselves and Love becoming greater and greater, appeared to stagger, and sometimes even to fall, beneath the weight that oppressed them. Patience perceived this, and called a lady whose name is Submission in Pains, to help and assist them in following the footsteps of Love.

Holy Love, ever vigilant, looked at them from afar to examine their proceedings. As soon as he saw them united to Submission and Patience, he sent them another lady, not always very welcome, whose name is Trial. He entrusted her with his most precious gifts ; gifts which he reserves for his most intimate friends ; rare gifts whose inestimable merit is so little known. This holy woman imparted them to Sophia and Eulalie abundantly. She did not allow a single hour to pass without furnishing them with new crosses. Sometimes they were calumnies, injuries, bad treatment on the part of men ; at other times they were violent temptations by which the demon endeavoured to discourage them. Again, Trial, being ordered to do so by Love, came to take away from the Companions their goods, their health ; and the day fol-

lowing she delivered them up to sadness, anguish, fears, and to all the most sensible and overwhelming interior pains. At the same time, Patience and Submission made them endure all these tribulations without complaining. They told them to unite their pains to those of their dear Jesus, and to conform to the Will of God in all things. By this salutary advice they taught them to amass immense treasures for eternity.

Sophia and Eulalie, fortified by Patience and Submission, and made perfect by Trial; weary, faint, fatigued, and quite exhausted; at length accomplished the half of this painful way through which Love was leading them. Divine Love, satisfied with their ardour in suffering without listening to the voice of Nature, slackened his speed, and allowed them to approach him. Then he addressed to them these consoling words:—"Courage, my dear children; if the labour affrights you, comfort yourselves by the hope of the immortal crown which is promised to you; persevere, and you will obtain eternal repose. You have already acquired the first degree of virtue which Patience requires of her disciples; you must now pass on to the second; look, and imitate me."

As he finished these words, Love took his cross from his shoulders, seized it in his arms, and clasped

it lovingly to his breast. A sweet look which he cast upon Sophia and Eulalie invited them to do the same ; but the more powerfully to induce them to do so, he sent to them a lady called Joy in Suffering. This lady, whose cheerfulness is so delightful, commanded them to take into their hands the cross which had been imposed upon them, to look upon it with complacency, to embrace it tenderly, and to clasp it to their hearts. The young pupils submitted to this ordeal without delay ; then their crosses appeared to them so light, that they were in utter astonishment as to how it was that it had previously cost them so much to bear them. Joy in Suffering frequently told them that "the more they loved the Cross, the more amiable it would appear to them ; and that the more willingly they attached themselves to it, the more pleasing would they be in the sight of God, and the more like to His Only Son." These holy words, so conformable to the spirit of Jesus Christ, filled them with consolation and fortitude, and caused them to experience great joy in all their afflictions.

Love, to purify them still more, ordered Patience to introduce them to the last degree of virtue to which she leads those who live under her laws. This good lady delayed not to obey a command which gave her so much delight. For this purpose,

she called to her aid the services of one whom she herself had most carefully educated ; his name is Holy Desire of the Cross. She employed him to instruct and make perfect the souls whom Love had confided to her care. As soon as Sophia and Eulalie saw Holy Desire of the Cross appear, they felt the most tender affection for him. He bore in his flesh the sacred stigmata of the Saviour. In the midst of pains his heart superabounded with joy. He sang canticles of thanksgiving, because he had been judged worthy to suffer for the love of his Well-Beloved ; he ardently longed for fresh torments ; he called sufferings his support and his felicity ; he looked upon crosses as magnificent gifts, and as the most signal marks of God's love for him. Animated with this thought, he sought after them with the greatest eagerness.

"Let me suffer constantly, O God," he cried out a thousand times ; "let me suffer constantly, that I may give continual proof of my love for Thee. O how sweet it is to follow the Spotless Lamb ! How sweet to suffer and to immolate one's self with Him ! Lord, what dost Thou ask of me ? Is it my blood ? I am ready to pour out the last drop for Thee. My health ? Behold me ready to endure the keenest pain for love of Thee. My life ? I ardently desire to sacrifice it for Thee, even

in the midst of most dreadful torments. My soul insatiably thirsts to bear Thee company on Calvary, there to die with Thee."

Sophia and Eulalie were justly astonished at what they saw and heard ; but their astonishment greatly increased when they felt Holy Desire of the Cross insinuating himself into their hearts. They then commenced to sigh after the happiness of suffering much for their amiable Saviour. Henceforth they desired only Love's rigours, and regarded them as great and inestimable favours. To render themselves worthy of them they redoubled their speed, so as to arrive more promptly at the top of the mountain. It was upon this sacred mountain that they expected to drink deeply of the chalice of bitterness, or rather of consolation and delight. They were not deceived. Divine Love, who had just disappeared, again presented himself to them, and this dear object of their affection presented himself as attached to the Cross which he had for so long a time, and with so much labour and fatigue, carried before them. At this sight, their sensibility and gratitude greatly increased ; above all, when Love assured them that it was for their sakes he had endured all this. Sorrow and compassion seized upon their souls ; sweet tears flowed from their eyes ; they gave vent to amorous sighs ; they

had no words by which they could express their gratitude; they could only do so by sobs, groans, and transports of love. But Holy Love was not contented with a barren admiration, or with passing sentiments. He therefore told his pupils "that he was their model," and asked them, "if they desired to imitate him?"

They answered, "We most ardently desire to follow and imitate thee in everything."

Love, satisfied with this answer, spoke to them in this manner: "My dear children, you doubtless remember, and I with pleasure recall it to my remembrance, that often in your fervour, you said to each other: 'Let us go to Love, let us embrace Love, let us immolate ourselves to Love, and let us unite ourselves so intimately to Love that nothing may ever be able to separate us from him!' Now is the time to fulfil your promise. You have walked in Love's footsteps with constancy; but now you must be transformed into him, and, so to say, become entirely one with him. Now Love, as you see, is extended on the Cross, you should therefore unite yourselves to him, attach yourselves to the Cross, there to be sacrificed and immolated to Love and by Love."

Sophia and Eulalie could not resist these words; they ran to the arms of Divine Love, and begged

him to dispose of them according to his will. Love commanded them to lie down upon the Cross, and to repose upon this bed of pain, with more pleasure and satisfaction than the voluptuous do upon their soft couches. The fervent Companions obeyed with inconceivable joy. They presented to Love their hands, their feet, and their hearts, so that he might bind them with his chains, and wound them with his arrows. Love has always hammer and nails, which he now made use of to crucify them with himself. He immediately drew them to himself in so strong and touching a manner, that they became so intimately united to him as to be, so to say, one with him. The first moments of this spiritual crucifixion were exceedingly delicious to Sophia and Eulalie ; but these sensible consolations quickly disappeared to give place to keen pain, bitterness, and desolation. In a moment their souls were filled with so many overwhelming interior pains, their minds were obscured by such thick darkness, and such excessive terror seized their hearts, that, in the midst of this violent storm, they could scarce pronounce one single word, or heave a single sigh. The heavens appeared to them like brass ; Love seemed to be insensible to all their sufferings ; they thought that all hell had been let loose against them to torment and discourage them. All that

they had done for the Lord, and all the benefits this Good Father had bestowed upon them, had now escaped their memory. In everything they had done, they found reasons for fear and dread. They now looked upon God as an angry Judge, ready to condemn them to eternal pains. Every moment they imagined they heard this terrible sentence pronounced, "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." In this painful situation all they could do was to say from time to time: "Love, Love, what must we do?"

Love would answer, "Suffer and love; suffer for the God you love, and love the God who gives you sufferings." These words would raise up their falling courage, and fill them with perfect resignation. But what reanimated their courage in a more particular manner was, to see that Love suffered the same pains without having merited them. It was then they offered themselves to suffer still more, to expiate their offences, which deserved to be punished with the greatest torments.

Wisdom, Vigilance, Patience, Submission, Joy in Suffering, and Holy Desire of the Cross, constantly remained near the Pupils of Suffering Love; but the desolation they experienced so troubled and darkened their souls, that they thought they were deprived of the company of these holy Virtues.

Love did not undeceive them, but left them in this error ; thus the desolation of their painful state was augmented. Nevertheless, in order to support them in the midst of these rigorous trials, he sometimes repeated to them the following words : "Courage, beloved of the Lord, courage ; your God looks upon you with complacency ; He is pleased to see you so constant in the midst of adversity ; do not, therefore, let this tempest shake you. Remember that your Well-Beloved is a Spouse who has shed all His blood for you, that the dowry of His alliance is founded on the Sacrifice of the Cross, and that the soul cannot be His spouse unless she has first been His victim."

Whatever may be the accents of Love, they are always amiable ; for this reason Sophia and Eulalie carefully treasured up his every word, and used them as a salutary balm to assuage their pains. But, as soon as the demon saw that they were enjoying a little tranquillity, he redoubled his efforts to induce them to descend from the Cross, and fly from Divine Love. The faithful Disciples of Love never yielded to the attacks of Satan ; the more he was enraged against them, the more they protested that they would remain inviolably attached to Love. They said continually, "To love always, to suffer always, constantly to embrace the Cross

to which Love is attached, to remain ever with him, and never to be separated from him ; this is our choice ! No, dear Love, we will never forsake you, even if you should cause us to die of pain. Ah ! how sweet would death be to us, if we had the happiness of receiving it from your hands !”

Love, satisfied with their dispositions, eased their pains, and restored them to peace and tranquillity. He asked them if they desired to descend from the Cross ? They answered that they would only descend with him, and that so long as he was attached to it, they would continue to be his companions. At this sincere avowal, the heart of Love was filled with joy, and, to recompense the generosity of his Pupils, he overwhelmed them with consolations. As they moved only in him, being, as it were, entirely wrapt up in him, he gave them wings, and invited them to fly with him to behold new wonders.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

UNIVERSAL DESTITUTION AND PERFECT DETACHMENT INTRODUCE SOPHIA AND EULALIE TO HOLY POVERTY.



WHILE the two virtuous Companions (now happily dead to themselves and to the world) were still following Love in the paths of Patience, they saw coming towards them two holy persons whom Love had called. The name of one is Universal Destitution, and the name of the other Perfect Detachment. The former possesses nothing, the latter is attached to nothing on earth; thus they travel on towards Perfection with incredible agility and swiftness. Delivered from the importunate burden of the goods and commodities of life, no object divides their affections, and all their desires are elevated towards their Sovereign Good. As soon as they met the two pious Companions, they told them that they were the Ambassadors of Holy Poverty, and asked them if they desired to visit this excellent Virtue. To which they replied "that they were determined to go wherever Divine Love wished to conduct them." Then these holy Messengers imparted to them some of the spiritual

riches which they possess ; for it is spiritual riches alone that they esteem—they care not for any other.

Destitution despoiled them of everything in exterior things which he thought superfluous, and Detachment took from their hearts all affection which they might still have for necessary things. Both reminded the young Companions of that heavenly doctrine of the Apostle, who tells the faithful to “use this world as if they used it not ; for the fashion of this world passeth away.” (1 Cor. vii. 31.) “Let all your thoughts,” said they, “and all your desires tend towards the Palace of True Happiness, where alone are solid and eternal pleasures.” They then made known to their pupils the advantages of Holy Poverty ; they told them how sweet and desirable is the liberty which souls devoted to her enjoy. After having eulogised this Virtue, which is honoured with the esteem of the Son of God, they introduced Sophia and Eulalie into her house. The young virgins were preceded by Divine Love, and accompanied by Wisdom and Vigilance.

In the house of Holy Poverty, so dear to God, there is nothing superfluous. Everything is in admirable simplicity. The inhabitants of this place have such great indifference for temporal advan-

tages that they joyfully suffer the loss of their goods, and are delighted to meet with occasions of imitating the Man-God who had not where to lay His head.

In this amiable retreat there are two ladies who are sisters, and who bear the same name. The one is called Spiritual Poverty, the other Corporal Poverty. The former by herself, and without her sister, is always pleasing to the Lord ; the latter is pleasing to Him only when united with her sister. Spiritual Poverty has no contracted alliance with her sister, and is often seen without her. Nevertheless, her sister is attached to her by an indissoluble bond, and cannot be separated from her. This appears difficult to comprehend, but we need not be astonished, for in the Palace of Virtues there are many things above all human understanding. We must not confound Corporal Poverty with a certain person who calls herself by the same name, and who, at the same time, affects her tone and manner. It is easy to be deceived, for exteriorly they very much resemble each other ; there is, however, an essential difference, and they are directly opposed to each other. The one is gentle, patient, submissive, kind, grateful, always satisfied, and sometimes even joyous ; but the other is the intimate friend of Sadness, Hypocrisy, Ingra-

titude, Murmuring, Impatience, Wrath, and, above all, Jealousy. This latter one, who is a wicked, contemptible, and hideous shrew, is followed by an innumerable multitude of disciples, while the former, who is a good, amiable, and estimable Virtue, draws to herself and forms but few pupils.

Love, who only desires the good of those he loves, enlightened his Disciples, and then led them into the interior of Holy Poverty's house. They saw Spiritual Poverty entirely occupied in depriving herself of all the commodities of life, and generously making a sacrifice of everything calculated to enfeeble the love which she had for God. As soon as she perceived in herself the least affection for any object whatever, she called Holy Detachment to deliver her from it at once. Her love then became purer and more worthy of the Supreme Being. She leaped for joy whenever Universal Destitution took from her some of the things which she possessed.

God, who is infinitely liberal in rewarding, and who never allows Himself to be surpassed in generosity, repaid her voluntary offerings by an abundance of spiritual riches. He poured into her soul without measure His most precious treasures and graces. This holy lady, rewarded a hundredfold for the sacrifices she had made, desired only to

arrive at the Palace of True Happiness, and sought after occasions of enduring new privations in order to be more pleasing to her Sovereign Good. She was continually in the company of a person well worthy of her esteem ; her name is Holy Indifference. This venerable lady, perfectly insensible to all worldly things, taught Holy Poverty never to be disquieted at anything, to rejoice in the midst of privations as well as in the midst of abundance, to reserve to herself only necessary things, and to offer to God all her superfluities, by bestowing them upon the poor and needy.

Animated with these sublime sentiments, which Divine Love excited in her soul, they frequently heard her say :—" My Saviour and my King was born in a stable, without a bed, without a cradle, without a house ! I see Him deprived of all human assistance ; can I then desire abundance, and seek after the commodities of life ? If I did so, how insensible would be my soul ! My Love, the only object of my affections, passed all His life in extreme indigence and universal privation ; He died naked upon the Cross, abandoned even by His own Disciples, and can I desire anything here below ? Should I not rather desire with my whole heart to see all temporal advantages taken from me, thus to be like my Well-Beloved ? Jesus is my All ; His

example is my law ; to possess Him is to be infinitely rich. With Him I am supremely happy ; besides Him, I desire nothing."

Sophia and Eulalie were listening to this angelic person with the greatest delight, when Love bade them approach her, so that she might impress upon their souls the noble sentiments with which her own was animated. As soon as they drew near to her she opened their hearts, and took from them all affections and desires which were not sufficiently pure. At the same moment they began to regard Spiritual Poverty as a divine Virtue who was to become their happiness and delight. This holy lady said to them :—

"Do not deceive yourselves—to be truly poor it does not suffice to be deprived of worldly goods. The poorest of men would never be a true disciple of the poor and humble Jesus, if he did not renounce the *desire* of those things the possession of which he is deprived of. If you are poor, you must sincerely love your state, never desire earthly riches, and learn to love that precious treasure—that Virtue which was the delight of the Son of God. On the other hand, if you are rich, you must despise riches ; you must be always ready to sacrifice them to the Lord when it pleases Him, and in the manner it pleases Him. This is the

only means of aspiring to that happiness promised by Jesus Christ. 'Blessed,' says He, 'are the poor in *spirit*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' (Matt. v. 3.) O what an inestimable exchange; for a passing privation, the eternal enjoyment of the Divinity! What heart can be insensible to this? What heart can preserve the least affection for worldly treasures?"

Sophia and Eulalie promised Spiritual Poverty to comply henceforth with her laws, and constantly to follow her holy maxims. Love, pleased with their docility, likewise made known to them the excellence of Corporal Poverty. "This holy lady," said he to them, "listens attentively to the lessons of her sister, and takes them for the invariable rule of her conduct. She is always accompanied by a person very dear to God; her name is Humble Indigence. There is another woman who bears the same name, but there is no affinity between them. This latter is proud and arrogant; she continually revolts against the Most High; she remains in the world, and has no entrance into the Palace of Virtues. Humble Indigence, on the contrary, always conforms to the orders of the Eternal, never complains, nor allows the least murmur to escape her. The serenity of her countenance indicates the satisfaction of her heart and the submission of her


soul. The inseparable Companion of Holy Corporal Poverty, she supports with her all adversities and every privation. Both suffer together with perfect obedience. This admirable Poverty gratefully receives whatever is necessary for her from a worthy daughter of Charity, whose name is Alms."

The young Companions, naturally compassionate, were deeply moved upon beholding the state of this virtuous lady, who appeared to them to be in great want. Poverty perceived this, and, not being able to endure that they should be afflicted at that which constituted her happiness, spoke to them in a cheerful and consoling manner, and said:—"My dear children, do not afflict yourselves, for in the situation, which appears to you so painful, my heart is full of joy, I experience immense delight. I possess nothing, it is true; but then I desire nothing. This disposition causes me to enjoy a peace and tranquillity which the rich of the world know not, and the sweetness of which they cannot comprehend. The more I am deprived of earthly treasures, the richer I am in heavenly ones. The God of Goodness allows me to draw abundantly from the treasures of His mercy; He pours into my soul the vivifying torrent of His consolations. Even when He deprives me of these satisfactions, I find in my submission to His good pleasure an

inexhaustible source of grace and merit. While upon earth I live in abjection and poverty, the Almighty is preparing for me a brilliant crown, with which He will adorn my head in heaven. This profane world, whose idol is pride, will then envy my felicity ; it will see, but, alas, too late, how sweet it is to walk in the footsteps of the Son of God, who, being rich, yet for our sakes became poor. At the present time even, if desires could have access to the Palace of True Happiness, the Angels would wish for the glory I possess, the glory of bearing so much resemblance to my Divine Model. O my Saviour, if men could but understand how delightful it is to leave all to follow Thee, there are none who would not despoil themselves of all their possessions to walk with Thee in the deprivation of all things." She pronounced these last words with such lively ardour and perfect contentment that Sophia and Eulalie were moved to the very bottom of their hearts, not with compassion as before, but with a sincere desire of resembling this lady in her heroic detachment. They could not refrain from admiring in that dwelling, so contemptible in appearance, all those rare and estimable Virtues. In obedience to the orders of Love they took leave of them, being well resolved to imitate them and to respect all their Disciples.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE ARRIVE AT THE APARTMENT
OF VIRGINITY.

OPHIA and Eulalie followed Love with new ardour, and sought after every means of becoming more and more pleasing to the Lord. They knew not that Love was conducting them to a sacred asylum, in which the Celestial Spouse is pleased to dwell, and in which He reposes with loving complacency. This Sanctuary, this temple of the Holy Ghost, is the apartment of Virginity. It is surrounded with so beautiful a light that the brightness of the sun cannot equal its splendour. Its entrance gate is made of one only precious stone. The walls are whiter than alabaster; they exhale an odour so sweet and agreeable, that it surpasses the fragrance of all the flowers of Spring. No one can look upon the exterior of this holy house without ardently desiring to see the magnificence of its interior. For this reason Sophia and Eulalie eagerly requested their Guide to grant them the favour of being introduced therein. Holy Love willingly consented; but before doing so, he wounded them with a new arrow which greatly increased their love for God. He told them

that in order to be well received by this Virtue, they must give themselves entirely to Jesus, without reserve, without division, and for ever. "This condition is essential," said he, "if you desire Virginité to admit you among the number of her Disciples, and to present you to the Divine Spouse, as victims immolated to Him, and who live only for Him." The young Pupils of Love assured him that all their desire was to consecrate themselves to God ; therefore, to give him unequivocal proofs of this, they abandoned themselves more entirely than ever to all his movements.

Then Vigilance knocked at the door of Virginité. A very grave and prudent lady appeared at a latticed window. As soon as she perceived who was there, she opened the door without making any difficulty ; this lady's name is Holy Reserve. She is the faithful guardian of this chaste dwelling ; she never leaves the entrance ; she only allows those to approach Virginité who will either edify her or profit by her example. Reserve gave a cordial reception to Vigilance, and testified the greatest esteem for her. She warmly congratulated Sophia and Eulalie upon being conducted by a person of such rare merit, and recommended them to follow her advice constantly. She then asked them the motive which prompted them to visit Virginité. "If," said she,

"it is curiosity which draws you, I advise you to retire ; we do not allow useless people to enter here ; only those whose intention is sincere and upright can be admitted."

The two fervent Companions answered that they had come to learn how to love and serve the Lord in the best possible manner.

"But," said Reserve, "does not the perfection that this angelic Virtue requires of those who live under her laws terrify you ? Do you believe that you can attain it ? Are you determined to persevere in your resolution ?"

"We know," answered Sophia, "that of ourselves we can do nothing ; but we hope to accomplish all by the grace of God, who has always so lovingly and so efficaciously assisted us."

"It is true," replied Reserve, "that with grace you can do all things ; but does grace now at this time urge you to die entirely to yourselves, to forget self in everything, and never to follow the inclinations of Nature ? I forewarn you that Nature, corrupted by sin, trembles at the sight of Virginity : she cannot subsist with her ; she must either fly from her, or expire at her feet."

"Ah !" said little Eulalie, with a little vivacity, "let her die, let Nature which draws us into vice die, let her perish, and let her arise no more ; let

Grace alone triumph ! May she alone live and reign in our souls as Queen !”

“ These words are admirable,” said Reserve, “ and the execution of them will be very pleasing to the Lord ; but what shall you think, when you see Virginity shut up in rigorous solitude, separated from the world and all its vain pleasures, surrounded with the thorns of penance and severe guardians, who never leave her ? Will not this sight make you tremble ? Will it not oblige you to return back ?”

“ No, no,” answered Sophia, firmly ; “ nothing can make us change our desires ; moreover, we hope, by the help of the Most High, to persevere in the resolution we have taken of loving God alone.”

Eulalie, with simplicity, added : “ We have seen Love upon the Cross, without trembling and without recoiling ; we have been crucified with him ; nothing now is capable of shaking our resolution.”

Then Reserve, edified by their constancy, opened a second door still more brilliant than the first, and the Pupils of Love entered the apartment of Virginity ! How much beauty met their astonished gaze ! They thought that they were in the terrestrial Paradise, so delightful did this place appear to them. Two young girls, more beautiful than the Aurora, and as pure as Angels, joyfully received

them into their sacred asylum ; their names are Innocence and Modesty. The former clothed them with a robe whiter than snow ; the latter placed upon their heads a mysterious veil, the symbol of chastity. Adorned with this virginal livery, the fervent Companions ardently desired to be consecrated for ever to Jesus Christ, and to contract with Him an everlasting alliance. They also wished to cast themselves at the feet of Virginity, to vow to her an entire obedience and to range themselves for ever under her laws. But Vigilance retained them, and said "that it would be to their advantage to know this rare Virtue more perfectly before placing themselves under her standard."

Wisdom also imparted to them her discernment, and Holy Love held before their eyes the lamp which he has received from God Himself. The young Pupils then commenced to contemplate the Virtues which surround Virginity, and who labour in unison with her to form faithful Spouses of the Spotless Lamb. They first saw one of the followers of this admirable lady, whose name is Holy Foresight. This pious girl continually accompanies her. She is of great service to her ; she is entirely occupied in examining and scrupulously destroying all that can injure or diminish the integrity of this celestial Virtue. This incorruptible guard did not

fail to examine carefully the motives which had led Sophia and Eulalie to this venerable retreat. Being satisfied with the purity of their intentions, she placed no obstacle to their entrance.

A little further on than Holy Foresight, there were two persons whose elevated virtue gives great glory to that of Virginity. Their names are Contempt of the Present Life and Holy Forgetfulness of Self.

The former inspires this most excellent lady with a great desire of death, in order that she may enjoy the presence of her Sacred Spouse and see His unveiled and unclouded beauty in the Palace of True Happiness. The latter moves her to think only of her Well-Beloved, to reflect on His Divine Perfections, and to seek alone in all things the interest, honour, and glory of God. As soon as Sophia and Eulalie approached these two persons, they had again to undergo a severe examination.

Holy Contempt of Life asked them "if they feared death." And he added that, "if they did not ardently desire to possess God, their love for Him was very feeble, and that they did not deserve to be ranked amongst the number of His Spouses." They answered that, "far from fearing the arrival of that happy moment which was to unite them to their Well-Beloved, they impatiently longed for it ;

but at the same time with an entire conformity to the Will of God." Holy Contempt of the Present Life being satisfied with their answer, handed them over to his intimate friend.

Holy Forgetfulness of Self then began to speak, and said : " My dear children, enter into yourselves with me, and let us see if you are worthy of walking in the footsteps of a Virtue in whom the Son of God delights. Are you not of the number of those mercenary souls who desire to be the disciples of Virginité in order to be more complete masters of their own wills, to live in greater repose, and to avoid engaging in the hard and painful service of a holy person whose name is Marriage ? Or again, do you not belong to that class of inconstant souls whose fervour is of short duration, and whose affections the loveliness of Virginité can captivate only for a time ? If you recognise yourselves in either of these portraits, I beg of you to retire ; it will be better for you to depart now, than to do so hereafter through fickleness, weariness, disgust, or discouragement. But, my dear children, if in attaching yourselves to Virginité you have no other intention than that of becoming more pleasing to the Lord, of serving Him more freely, of imitating Him more faithfully, and of testifying more submission to His Divine counsels, then come, follow

this beautiful Virtue. The more empty of the world and self the Celestial Spouse shall find you, with so much the more liberality and abundance will He pour His treasures into your souls."

Sophia and Eulalie assured him that "it was neither to avoid the rigours of the Cross, nor to enjoy spiritual sweetnesses, that they desired to follow Virginity; but only to please the Lord and to consecrate to Him their hearts without reserve." Then Holy Forgetfulness of Self permitted them to remain in that sacred asylum and consider all its marvels in detail. It was then they recognised the truth of the words of Holy Reserve, that Virginity is always surrounded by severe guards, who never leave her. They saw around her a numerous company, and each person watched over her integral beauty with peculiar care.

Humility has given her, to remain always near her, a young man as little known as he is estimable; his name is Contempt of Self. . This person, formed in the school of Jesus Christ, teaches her to esteem herself as nothing, and to look upon herself as the last of all creatures. Virginity observes this advice with admirable docility. She so sincerely despises herself that, in spite of the intimate communications she has with her Beloved, she believes herself unworthy to be His servant. She is always pleased

with those who desire to humble her ; if any one appears to despise her, she confesses that it is with justice they do so. Opprobrium has great attractions for her, and she is persuaded that she merits it.

Courage and Constancy are ordered by Patience to support Virginité in her pains and crosses. Resignation invites her to submit joyfully to all kinds of trials. Mortification has chased far away from her Voluptuousness, Softness, Vain Delicacy, and Superfluous Cares. Mortification has also conducted to her Sobriety, Austerity, and Voluntary Privation of Permitted Pleasures. These three persons unite together to excite her to avoid with the greatest care, everything capable of flattering the senses and inflaming concupiscence. They hold her always ready to receive the chaste embraces of her Divine Spouse. Wisdom has placed Noble Simplicity before her. This evangelical daughter, in cutting off from the exterior of Virginité everything calculated to enhance her corporal beauty, gives greater brilliancy to her interior beauty, and renders her more worthy of the tender regards of her Well-Beloved. The Celestial Spouse, jealous of the integrity of a Virtue which so delights Him, has sent to her from the Palace of True Happiness, two holy ladies, who guard her with most zealous

attention. One is called Hidden Life, the other Strength of God.

In the arms of the former, Virginité reposes in safety. This amiable lady covers her with a salutary shade, and hides from her eyes all that can flatter the senses. Under her wings, Virginité conceals the graces and favours with which the Most High enriches her. Thus she enjoys in peace the delicious entertainments of her Well-Beloved. She truly reigns, though, at the same time, she recognises Him for her Sovereign Lord and Master.

Strength of God holds in her right hand a flaming sword, with which she terrifies and strikes the enemies of Virginité; with her left hand she chains them and prevents them from injuring her. By the assistance of this powerful Protectress, Virginité is always victorious; her every combat is followed by a glorious triumph.

Sophia and Eulalie, being greatly astonished at all they saw, asked their Guides why Virginité was surrounded by so many Virtues who all watch over her with so much care. "Because," answered Wisdom, "this angelic Virtue is very easily tar-nished. Almost nothing will injure her; the lightest stain is sufficient to sully her beauty. A single vitiated breath will cause her to lose that admirable whiteness which renders her so dear to

the heart of God. You see then why she has need of all these vigilant guards to preserve her perfect purity. If you desire to follow her, you must also allow yourselves to be led by these wise Guides ; without them you cannot long walk in the footsteps of this sublime virtue."

The young Companions humbly thanked Wisdom for having thus enlightened them. Their desires becoming more ardent every moment, they were at length permitted to approach Virginity, and contemplate her beauty.

Her countenance shone with divine light. Her head was crowned with a ray of celestial glory ; her eyes gave expression to all the tenderness of Holy Love and her heart seemed all on fire. She reposed in peace between Charity and Purity. These illustrious Virtues are always with her ; they load her with caresses and gifts ; they have taken care of her from her infancy ; they have enlightened her in her youth ; they have formed her heart solely according to the good pleasure of her Divine Spouse ; they have embellished her soul with ornaments which procure her that interior beauty which the angels so rapturously admire. They continually offer her to the Lord as His chosen victim. Purity presents her with lilies, and Charity with roses ; Virginity makes of them an agreeable nosegay,

which she keeps for her Well-Beloved. He receives it with satisfaction and recompenses her by pouring into her mouth a vivifying nectar, which by its strength and sweetness inebriates her in a marvellous manner. He gives her to eat of the fruits of His garden ; He adorns her also with flowers planted by His own hand, and their odour is so sweet that she is as it were embalmed ; He opens to her His treasures and makes her a participator of His riches ; He enlightens her with His light ; He Himself instructs her, and discloses to her His precious secrets. He is so jealous of the love of this His cherished Spouse that He desires her to be entirely His. He Himself keeps her heart, which He has chosen for Himself. He closes its entrance ; it is opened to Him alone ; He alone has the right of reposing there ; thus He there reigns as Sovereign Lord. He is its only Master and its only Spouse. He there acts, He there operates ; He forms all its sentiments ; He directs all its intentions ; He is the beginning and the object of all its desires ; He sets it on fire with the flame He Himself has enkindled. In this close and delicious union, the lover is transformed into her Divine Love ; she is one with Him ; she is absorbed and lost in Him ; she, as it were, passes into His bosom, and cannot separate herself from Him. In

this sweet familiarity with her Lord and God, happy Virginity enjoys here below a foretaste of the felicity of the Blessed in Heaven. She is the true image of the pure life of the Angels ; she lives on earth, but her thoughts and affections are in heaven. Already she is practising that noble occupation which will be her sole employment for all eternity. Day and night she thinks only of her Adorable Spouse ; she is continually contemplating Him, and ever finding in Him new attractions. Thus in her rapture she cries out : "O my Well-Beloved, how beautiful Thou art ! : How much grace and loveliness dost Thou possess !" This knowledge she has of her Sacred Lover inflames her with so ardent a love for Him, that she desires to be all love, and to become a living flame, consumed for the Object she adores. The more she considers this worthy Object of her affections, the more she loves Him, and the more ardently she desires to see Him. She fears not death ; its approach does not terrify her ; on the contrary, she longs for the arrival of that happy moment in which she shall rest for ever in the bosom of her God. She languishes with the expectation of her last sigh. Like a chaste dove, she grieves and mourns to be separated from Him who has captivated her ; and this Divine Lover, to assuage her pains, comes each

day to visit her and honour her with His chaste caresses.

Sophia, seized with astonishment at the sight of all these prodigies, could not long contain herself. Speaking to Love, she cried out : “ O how admirable is Virginité ! How noble she is ! How desirable her privileges ! How perfect the gifts she receives from above ! O Holy Love, you who so abundantly pour those living flames into her heart, deign to bestow on me the favour of following her, and of living under her laws.” Eulalie, in imitation of her Companion, also gave expression to her ardent desires, and implored Love to unite her indissolubly to Virginité. Divine Love listened to their earnest petitions. He presented them to this incomparable lady, requesting her to receive them amongst the number of her disciples.

Virginité is ever obedient to the desires of Love ; she never refuses him anything. Therefore she willingly received these privileged souls whom Love himself had guided and supported. “ My dear friends,” said she to them, in a soft sweet tone, “ Do you sincerely desire to love my Spouse ? Ah ! if you knew how amiable He is you would desire nothing so much as to love Him. You would wish to increase in His love every moment. Ah ! how beautiful is my Well-Beloved ! He is altogether

perfect, lovely, adorable ! O that I could consecrate to Him the hearts of all men ; but since I can only offer Him my own, I wish at least to give it to Him entirely ! Do you not also, my dear children, desire to present yours to Him ? He ardently desires it, He urgently requests it. Hear Him saying to each of you : ' My daughter, give Me thy heart ! ' In addressing to you these touching words, He shows you His Sacred Heart all burning with love, and He offers it to you. Who can resist so strong a love, such tender invitations, a liberality so boundless ?

Sophia and Eulalie, deeply moved, answered " that they desired nothing so much as to love God solely, sovereignly, and for ever." Then Virginity showed them her heart. It was wounded on every side ; it was pierced by a golden arrow, which made a large, deep, but most desirable wound. This inestimable Virtue considered her wounds with complacency ; they constituted her joy, happiness, and felicity. " Open," said she to her new Disciples, " open your hearts to my Well-Beloved. No sooner will He have wounded them than you will bless the hand that struck you ; you will implore Him to redouble His blows, and beg Him to bestow upon you the grace of expiring amid the flames of His divine fire."

While Virginity was speaking, Sophia and Eulalie perceived that she held in her right-hand a lighted lamp, which Charity was continually filling with blessed oil. All who range themselves under the standard of this inestimable Virtue, are enlightened and warmed by this mysterious lamp. With the assistance of this beneficent light they discover the beauty of the Spouse, they see the way which leads to Him, they follow Him with security. Through the benign heat of this vivifying lamp, they are excited to love more ardently the Holy Spouse of Virgins.

The young Companions saw also that Virginity carried in her right hand golden chains enriched with precious stones, which she uses to bind to her Spouse those who desire to love Him with a love as perfect as her own. Virginity presented these chains to Sophia and Eulalie, at the same time calling their attention to the beauty of them. "My Beloved," said she, "has wrought them with His adorable hands. He has taken pleasure in forming them and adorning them to bind His faithful lovers. He has captivated my heart ; and I in return desire to draw all hearts to Him. I am His slave, nevertheless I am free ; with Him I reign. I am united to Him by indissoluble bonds. He is near me, and within me ; nothing can separate us ; our union is

eternal ; God is its author, He will make it as lasting as Himself. Oh ! Sacred Spouse, how lively are Thy flames ! How touching is Thy discourse ! How penetrating Thy impressions ! How light Thy chains ! How delightful my bondage ! Precious treasures, glorious servitude ! I prefer you to all the crowns of earth ! And what more can I desire ? My Beloved is mine, and I am His ! He is the Supreme Good, with Him I am rich ! He is the Lord of lords, and the source of true glory ! With Him I am laden with honours ! He is the King of kings ; with Him I am Queen ! Ah ! my dear children, nothing is comparable to my Divine Spouse : you can never find a spouse so perfect, so worthy of being loved. Come then, consecrate yourselves to Him ; take Him for your portion and submit to His laws. Allow yourselves to be bound by these sacred bonds ; as soon as you bear them they will become so sweet to you, that you will each day desire to be bound with them more closely."

Sophia and Eulalie now ardently desired to engage in the service of Virginity. They were already presenting their hands to be chained to the Object of their affections, but Wisdom and Vigilance opposed their design. These two Virtues, in order to try their Pupils, forbade them at pre-

sent to range themselves under the standard of Virginity by an irrevocable and solemn promise. O what pain this delay of their consecration caused them ! O how many sighs and tears it cost them ! How wistfully they longed for the moment which was to consummate their sacrifice ! Hours appeared years to them ; they sighed continually for their Divine Spouse, to whom they desired to be united for ever ; they amorously complained to Him of their torment, and begged Him to shorten it. It was by this long and dolorous martyrdom that they at length arrived at the happy term of their ardent desires.

Divine Love prepared his Altar, and bade Sophia and Eulalie (who were overwhelmed with joy) approach. These innocent victims were immolated to the Lord, as a sacrifice pure and acceptable in His eyes. Holy Virginity crowned them with her precious gifts and imposed upon them the chains of which she is the guardian. The august Mary, the Mother and the Model of Virgins, presented them to her Son, that He might receive them among the number of His Spouses. The generous Companions vowed to Him, at the foot of the Altar, an inviolable fidelity. The amiable Saviour was pleased with their offering ; He contracted an alliance with them, the engagements of which He promised to

keep for ever ; then He raised them to the noble rank of Spouses. The Eternal Father looked with complacency upon them as His beloved children, and the Holy Spirit chose them for the cherished sanctuary in which He was pleased to dwell.

Oh, how delightful did this happy day appear to them, this happiest day of their lives, for which they had so long sighed ! They could not sufficiently admire the Goodness of the Lord, nor refrain from crying out in the transports of their gratitude : " How great is our happiness ! How desirable our glory ! O incomprehensible prodigy ! we have a God for our Spouse ! O how infinitely perfect He is ! what fidelity and love He merits ! "

While the young Virgins were congratulating each other on their happiness, and singing Canticles of praise to the Lord, Love told them that they had still to advance, and that there was yet something more to be seen in the Palace of Virtues. The fervent Companions promised to walk in his footsteps, and commenced to follow him without delay.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE FIX THEIR ABODE WITH HOLY PERFECTION, WHERE THEY ADMIRE DIVINE CHARITY, AND ALL THE OTHER VIRTUES.



FROM the apartment of Virginité to that of Perfection, the distance is not great ; it was to this Virtue that Love desired to conduct his Pupils. He confided the care of this to Wisdom and Vigilance ; he himself disappeared ; but only to reappear in a more surprising manner. Wisdom showed to Sophia and Eulalie a short path, by which they soon arrived at the dwelling of Perfection. This abode is the masterpiece of Grace, and the delight of Divine Love.

Wisdom, before permitting her young Disciples to see Holy Perfection, described her surpassing excellence, and said : " My dear children, you are going to see her to whom we may justly apply those words, in the Cantic of Canticles, ' Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee ! ' We can even perceive exteriorly her eminent interior qualities, her grave and modest air, her noble and majestic deportment, her sweet and gracious looks admirably indicate the peace which reigns in her soul. Her humility is so profound that she, as it were, buries herself in her own nothingness ; she

places herself beneath even the greatest sinners, and believes others to be much more holy and more agreeable to the Lord than herself. Her obedience is so perfect, that at the least sign of the will of her superiors she immediately submits herself to all their desires. She is so patient, that she suffers all kinds of pain with joy and with a sincere desire to suffer still more. Her purity is integral, her detachment universal. In all things she is unmindful of self, and seeks God alone. At all times, in all places, she thinks of Him alone, and her sole occupation is to endeavour to please Him. Her love for Him has no limit; it is a tender, ardent, generous, constant love. This cherished daughter of the Most High is so empty of the world and self, and so full of celestial gifts, that she now belongs to God alone. Her prolonged exile is painful to her; all her desire is to enter the Palace of True Happiness. To relieve her pain, God discovers to her, when rapt in sublime contemplation, the beauty of His countenance; He favours her with those ineffable pleasures, the sweetness of which only those souls who are truly faithful can understand. But so many gifts and graces serve only to make her more humble; she thinks that she has no virtue, and continually reproaches herself with negligence and tepidity in

the service of the Lord ; by this means, she never stops, but continually advances in the way of Salvation."

Sophia and Eulalie, after this discourse of Wisdom, expected to behold in Perfection an incomparable marvel, and they were not deceived. However, they were not a little surprised and astonished when, on entering, they perceived Holy Perfection in the midst of all the Virtues. But who can express the transports of their joy and admiration at another wonder which they now beheld? Divine Love had quitted the form under which he had, until then, shown himself to them ; they now saw this dear Master, who had conducted them so wisely, looking a thousand times more lovely than before. He appeared to them in his natural state, all radiant with glory. They thought they could never tire of gazing upon Holy Love, or rather, Divine Charity, resplendent with light, who was enkindling in the soul of Perfection the living flames of Divine Love.

Charity, the Queen of Virtues, was seated upon a throne made of incorruptible wood, covered with the purest gold, and adorned with precious stones. Victory and Peace stood by her side ; sweetness and compassion shone in her eyes, and she spread around her an infinite number of benefits. Mercy

carefully gathered them, and afterwards prudently and discreetly distributed them to the needy.

All the Virtues eagerly presented to Perfection the flowers which grew in their gardens. This holy lady received them with pleasure, and made of them a beautiful nosegay for the King of kings. Sophia and Eulalie were delighted to see the zeal with which all the Virtues offered their gifts to their Well-Beloved by the hands of Perfection. Humility brought violets, whose sweet odour filled this happy abode. Perfect Contrition held in her hands carnations, the agreeable variety and delicious perfume of which, indicated the strength and diversity of her sentiments for her adorable Saviour. Patience had wreaths of immortelles, the symbol of her invincible constancy. Virginity had gathered her lilies, whose dazzling whiteness was the image of her inviolable purity. Thus, all the Virtues were eager to give to the Lord some proofs of their fidelity. Charity, pleased with their efforts, liberally recompensed their attention and generosity. Her countenance emitted rays of living light, which fell upon each of them. Holy Perfection received these rays in so great abundance that she was entirely penetrated with them.

While the Virtues were gratefully receiving the rich presents of Charity, Sophia and Eulalie no-

ticed that the flowers of the Virtues upon which the rays of Charity did not fall, languished and withered, and that these same flowers became as fresh and beautiful as ever when the rays of light fell upon the Virtues who bore them. The young Companions, still novices in the dwelling of Perfection, admired this marvel; in their surprise, they asked Wisdom the reason of it. "It is," answered she, "because all the Virtues lose their merit without Charity. Without her they are only barren Virtues, and cannot produce fruits worthy of heaven. God, who is love, only receives those sacrifices favourably which are offered to Him with Charity, and in His eyes, those works only are meritorious which are animated by Charity. Listen," added she, "to the great Apostle: 'If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.'* You see, my dear children,"

* 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 3.

continued Wisdom, "how necessary it is to do all your actions in union with Charity. Fear not that this sublime Virtue will despise you ; she delights to dwell in all hearts who live by sanctifying grace. Charity, continues the same Apostle, 'is patient, is kind, is not provoked to anger.'* 'Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.'† Approach, then, her throne without fear ; it is the throne of Mercy, the refuge of the miserable, and the resource of the afflicted. This incomparable Queen reposes in the bosom of God, and draws from thence, in great abundance, all the riches and treasures which she so liberally pours into the souls of those who submit to her laws."

Wisdom was still speaking, when Sophia and Eulalie were dazzled by a ray of light which proceeded from the mouth of Charity, and which penetrated and inflamed their hearts. At this, they were filled with inexpressible joy, which they could no longer contain, and in their transports of gratitude they cried out a thousand times, "O Divine Charity ! O treasure of treasures ! O fruitful and inexhaustible source of the graces of my God ! O beautiful Virtue, whose attractions never fade, and who will for ever be the delight of

* 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

the Most High, and the felicity of His Elect, how sweet is your reign, how amiable your laws ! Receive us into the number of your faithful servants. Here are our hearts ; exercise your sovereign dominion over them, and inflame them with the sacred fire with which your own so ardently burns."

Perfection, seeing Sophia and Eulalie so favoured by Divine Charity, congratulated them upon this inestimable and unexpected favour ; she reminded them of those words which God spoke to the priests of the old law who were consecrated to His service : "I am the Lord your God ; be holy, because I am holy."* She also recalled to their remembrance that exhortation which Jesus Christ addressed to all men : "Be you, therefore, perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."† She then spoke to them with so much unction upon the happiness and joy which one experiences in labouring to become perfect, that they no longer found anything difficult in the service of God. The obstacles to be met with in the Way of Salvation were no longer capable of terrifying them. Trusting in the Lord, they now had no desire except to become Saints, to imitate their Saviour, and to correspond to His graces.

* Lev. xi. 44.

† Matt. v. 48.

As they were in this disposition, Wisdom called their attention to the advantageous position of the dwelling of Holy Perfection; they saw that it was situated in the most elevated position of the Palace of Virtues, and that on every side it commanded a splendid view of this admirable abode. Sophia and Eulalie, considering the sublimity of Perfection, and how precious she is in God's sight, formed the resolution of remaining with her, if such was the good pleasure of Charity. Wisdom approved of this desire, and, to consolidate it, bade them look once more upon the world which they discovered afar off. They fixed their eyes for a moment on that multitude of blinded creatures who are troubled and disquieted, who take incredible pains to run after a shadow of happiness, an idol of glory, or a transient pleasure. Comparing the false felicity of the world with the delights they experienced in the service of God, they deplored the misery of those foolish people who are lost by their own fault. Ah! how little did the world then appear to them! All its riches seemed to them less than a grain of sand; all its most alluring amusements appeared to them (as they really are) veritable evils. They saw those worldlings covered with such thick darkness that they could not refrain from publishing the goodness of the Almighty, who

had drawn them out of this abyss of miseries. They speedily turned away their eyes from these afflicting objects, to fix them again upon the marvellous things which were the subject of their admiration.

Wisdom called their attention to Holy Perseverance, whose presence is of indispensable utility to fervent souls ; she recommended them always to remain near this venerable lady, because she alone could introduce them into the Palace of True Happiness. "Although," said Wisdom to them, "you should have passed the greater part of your life in the company of the rarest virtues, if at the hour of death you were not in the arms of Perseverance, all your labours would be without fruit, and you would find yourself empty handed before the Tribunal of the living God." If on the contrary, she presents your last sigh to the Sovereign Judge, He will be to you a tender Father, ready to place upon your head the rich diadem of immortality." Sophia and Eulalie asked Wisdom by what means they could obtain and preserve the friendship of Perseverance. "Her friendship," answered Wisdom, "is a gift of God, which He grants to whom He pleases. He owes it to no one, and it is always by a pure effect of His goodness, that He bestows it upon those souls who are obedient to

His commands. But although it is a gratuitous gift, nevertheless God, who is infinitely good, refuses it to none who earnestly and sincerely pray for it. It is the grace of graces, and that which crowns all the others. Thus you cannot pray too fervently to obtain it. Pray, therefore, continually to the Lord to give you always the favour of enjoying the presence of Perseverance ; if you do so, you will infallibly receive the accomplishment of your prayers and desires."

The young Virgins assured Wisdom, that they would follow her advice. They then addressed themselves to Charity, earnestly imploring her to permit them to remain in the asylum of Holy Perfection, in order to learn how to please their Spouse more perfectly. Charity approved of their resolution, and the dwelling of Perfection became their abode. They never left this Virtue ; and enjoying her amiable company in peace, they with her made continual progress in the sublime paths of contemplation.

Wisdom did not abandon them ; but sustained them by her presence and by her counsels. Fervour, Vigilance, Holy Desire, and all the other Virtues watched continually over their proceedings, and ceased not to render to them their good offices. Charity continued to keep alive in their souls her

divine fire. The impressions she made upon their hearts were so lively, that they knew by experience that the ardour which had animated them since they had been in the apartment of Perfection was infinitely purer and more worthy of the Most High. They perceived that Charity, who is in fact no other than Holy Love, was conducting them in a new manner, and that she was completely destroying in their souls all that was natural, human, and imperfect.

Sophia and Eulalie abandoned themselves blindly to all the movements of Charity, and in a short time they drew so near to God, that they were intimately united to Him, absorbed in Him, and so to say, did nothing without Him. This is that great Perfection to which a soul, by a special privilege of grace, can attain even in this life.

CHAPTER XL.

SOPHIA AND EULALIE ENTER THE PALACE OF
TRUE HAPPINESS.



HE flames of sacred love increased and grew stronger in the souls of Sophia and Eulalie every moment. The feeble flesh not being able to bear the ardour and vivacity

of these flames, they were seized with a sweet languor which soon consumed their life. Divine Love again taking his ordinary form, came at length to break the bonds which held them captive. This beneficent Master, who had led them to the Palace of Virtues, announced to them that the hour had come in which they were to follow him into the Palace of True Happiness. Upon hearing this happy news they leaped for joy. They cast themselves into the arms of Love, that he might assist them to accomplish this last passage in safety; they at that moment ardently desired to receive once more the Bread of Angels, which, since they had dwelt with Perfection, had become their daily nourishment. Vigilance did not leave them without assistance. She begged Fervour to go promptly and tell Counsel that his dear spiritual children were about to sleep in the Lord. This worthy Minister of the Most High, to whom Sophia and Eulalie had so many times unveiled their interior, came in all haste to be the witness and the depository of their last sentiments. He bore in his venerable hands the holy oil which was to fortify them against the Powers of Hell. They received the salutary Uncction with the most lively faith, firm hope, and perfect contrition; afterwards the venerable Pontiff presented to them their Well-Beloved hidden be-

neath the sacramental veils. Their hearts were then full of joy, and they adored their Spouse with profoundest veneration. All the Virtues prostrated before the Lamb, and assisted at the visit which He was pleased to pay to His faithful Spouses. In this company so dear to the Heart of Jesus, the amiable Saviour hastened to descend into the souls of His beloved ones to receive the sacrifice of their lives, a sacrifice which they made with so much pleasure. As soon as these chaste Doves possessed this Treasure of treasures, this pledge of eternal glory, their faces shone with a cheerfulness and joy which plainly indicated the abundant consolations which filled their souls; they could only express their feelings by short but continual ejaculations of love; they placed their souls in the hands of their Creator, who was then reposing in the inmost depths of their hearts; they invoked the divine Mary, their tender Mother, and implored her to assist them at that moment so terrible to sinners, but so consoling to the just; They begged St. Michael and their good Guardian Angels not to abandon them. They earnestly prayed Love to accomplish his promise, and begged him to defer their union with their celestial Spouse no longer. Love seeing them so well disposed, called Death, who at the sound of his voice came

without delay. Sophia did not recognise him, for Death did not appear with those hideous features, which render him so terrible to worldlings; he did not give utterance to those sharp cries which strike criminal consciences with terror; he was not accompanied by his cruel ministers; on the contrary, he presented himself under the most agreeable exterior. Gentle and peaceable in the presence of these virtuous companions, he seemed to respect them, and to wait for their consent to strike them.

As the young Virgins had broken all their chains, by detaching themselves from all created objects, they were held to earth only by the feeble thread of life, thus Death had only this to break. Sophia and Eulalie united to Holy Perfection and the blessed Perseverance, assisted by Humility, fortified by Confidence in God, and all on fire with the flames of Divine Love, invited Death to strike the blow which would enable them to fly to the Object of all their desires. He yielded to their wishes and opened to them the gates of Eternity. Immediately all sensible things disappeared from their sight: they were in the presence of God. That Adorable Judge who was for them a Father full of tenderness, saw in their souls the features of His Beloved Son; He looked upon them with complacence, and addressed to them these consoling

words ; " Worthy Spouses of my Son, who have constantly walked in His footsteps, come, enjoy the vision of your celestial Lover. You have taken Him for your Model. He will now be your inheritance, and you shall reign with Him upon an everlasting throne."

This favourable judgment was immediately executed. A troop of Blessed Spirits came to meet the Spouses of the Lamb ; a multitude of wise Virgins celebrated the glorious triumph of their companions. Even the Queen of Angels and of Saints came to meet her cherished daughters ; she herself presented them with the palm of victory, she took them in her arms and bore them into the Palace of True Happiness. Ah ! who can understand what was then their ecstasy and rapture ! what marvels met their gaze ! The Lamb in order to recompense their fidelity placed a brilliant crown upon the head of each ; He allowed them to repose upon His bosom ; He honoured them with His divine embraces ; [He showed to them His incomparable Beauty all unveiled ; He overwhelmed them with a torrent of delights ; He gave them to drink deeply of the purest joy ; He transformed them into Himself and communicated to them the only true life. Thus, so to say deified, Sophia and Eulalie saw God face to face, without a veil, and

found in Him all possible delight and joy. They saw all they desired to see ; they learned all that they desired to know ; they met with all that they desired to love. As they were all absorbed in God, the centre of their felicity, glory, and happiness, they knew all His Perfections ; His Eternity, Power, Independence, Immutability, Wisdom, Goodness, Greatness, and Immensity. The more they knew this perfect God, the more they burned with the most pure, tender, noble, and generous love for Him. Charity, who in this Holy City reigns in all her splendour, drawing from the bosom of the Divinity the flames of which He is the source, communicated them to Sophia and Eulalie without reserve ; so that they were all on fire, all burning, all charity, for God and in God, who is truly Love. Thus penetrated with light and love, they contemplated in sweet repose and unalterable peace, the Power of the Father, the Wisdom of the Son, and the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. They adored the ineffable union of the Three Persons of the Most August Trinity. They blessed His Infinite Mercy ; they thanked Him, both for the innumerable benefits he had continually bestowed upon them during their mortal life, and also for the immortal glory with which he had crowned them. They ever found in Him new perfections to admire, adore,

love and praise. They were entirely absorbed in the Beatitude of this God in Three Persons. Inebriated with this torrent of delights, they tasted indescribable pleasures, which it is not possible for the human mind to comprehend, still less to describe.

In the Palace of True Happiness, Sophia and Eulalie were permitted to contemplate the Sacred Humanity of the Incarnate Word, the perfect Object of the complacency of the Eternal Father. They saw the God-Man clothed with all the apparel of His Majesty. They gazed attentively upon His admirable countenance, the Beauty of which is beyond all thought and expression. They saw those Divine eyes fixed upon them with incomparable goodness and sweetness; they listened to the words of peace and benediction which fell from those sacred lips. The wounds of the Crucified God-Man, surrounded with celestial light, appeared to them as so many fountains of life, from which there flow upon feeble mortals the graces of salvation, and upon the glorified Elect joy, abundance, and felicity. Plunging into His Sacred Wounds, inexhaustible sources of every good, they stopped at the Heart of this amiable Saviour, and remained rapt in ecstasy in that ocean of sweetness. In the midst of these inexplicable satisfactions they said

to each other:—"Behold this Divine Spouse, of whom we have heard so many marvels. O how feeble was all they told us of Him! How infinitely beneath the reality! O how perfect is our Well-Beloved! How happy we are to have left all and followed Him! How little it has cost us to obtain the happiness of possessing Him, and reposing in His adorable arms!"

Just beneath Jesus Christ, who is the true Sun of Justice, was His Divine Mother; who, as a brilliant Aurora, is the most beautiful ornament of the Celestial Court. Sophia and Eulalie admired this shining star, who appeased the anger of the Sovereign Judge by offering to Him her dear Son, the pledge of the reconciliation of the human race. They saw also the Cherubim plunged in profound adoration; the Seraphim inflamed with love for the Supreme Beauty; the Angels and Archangels prostrate before the Throne of the Lamb; the Prophets who contemplate the verities they foretold in figures; the twelve Apostles who enjoy in peace the fruit of their labours; the Martyrs enriched with shining purple; the Virgins decorated with their admirable purity, who present lilies and roses to the King of kings; zealous Pastors who are fed with the Bread of Life; in fine, they saw an innumerable multitude of Confessors, Penitents, Holy Men, and Holy

Women, covered with glory and resplendent with light. While they were rejoicing at their admittance into this blessed Company, they heard a melodious concert, which was a new subject of joy. All the happy Inhabitants were singing in chorus a canticle of praise, in honour of the thrice Holy God.

This Palace of True Happiness, into which Sophia and Eulalie had just entered, is not only the assembly of every good—it is also exempt from every evil. The Inhabitants taste a pure joy, without any mixture of sadness; they no longer have desires, for they have all that can be desired; there are no tears, their source is dried up; no kind of affliction has access there. The Lord, who recompenses His faithful servants as only God can do, is not satisfied with preparing for His children a felicity infinite in its nature, He also renders their happiness eternal in its duration. The Saints will be happy as long as God is God—that is to say, for ever. They will never fear to be taken from their Sovereign Good, nor be afraid that the source of their delight will be exhausted; they can never be separated from the God whom they possess, and will possess through all eternity. Sophia and Eulalie, having once entered into the Palace of True Happiness, will live there for ever; they will

for ever be absorbed in the joy of the Lord, in the Beatitude of a loving God and tender Father; they will for ever love without limit and without measure that Infinite Beauty, who has so many charms that they will never tire of beholding Him, although they will have Him unceasingly before their eyes. They will repose eternally under the shadow of His wings. O how they congratulated themselves upon having sacrificed all to give themselves to God! O how precious now did the crosses which they had carried after the Crucified appear! They now preferred them to a million worlds. If regret could enter the Palace of True Happiness, they would grieve for not having sufficiently loved their Sacred Lover, and for not having done more for Him. O prodigy of love, for a moment's constraint, for a few sighs, they now enjoy an immense and eternal weight of glory! Inebriated with the happiness which God bestows upon them, they are crowned by Him, and shall reign with Him for ever in His Kingdom. O what honour! O what felicity!

* * * * *

Christian souls—souls who sigh for this desirable lot—you have just learned the way which leads to this Palace, in which your Spouse has prepared for

you a place; follow constantly the way of the Cross; persevere in the Palace of Virtues; live here below with Divine Love. Let Love be your guide; let him reign in your hearts all the days of your lives; you will then die amid his holy flames, and afterwards enjoy their ineffable sweetness, in an infinitely more glorious manner in the Palace of True Happiness.

FINIS.

*Uniform with this volume, Fcap. 8vo., cloth extra,
Price 3s.,*

CISTERCIAN LEGENDS

Of the Thirteenth Century. Translated from the
Latin, by HENRY COLLINS.]

These Legends are almost all authenticated, either by the testimony of the writer himself, or of credible persons known to him. They are termed Legends, not as implying any doubt of their historical certainty, but on account of their connection with the marvellous, such histories generally going under that title.

CONTENTS :

On Religious Vocation
On Contrition
On Confession
On Temptation
Of Demons
Of Simplicity
The Blessed Virgin Mary
On Visions of Different Kinds
Of the Body of Christ

Of Miracles
Of the Dying
Of the Rewards and Punishments of the
Dead
Of Divers Matters

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS :

DUBLIN REVIEW.—“A number of interesting records of Cistercian sanctity and cloistral experience, which remind us forcibly of the illustrations in the ‘Christian Perfection of Rodriguez.’”

WEEKLY REGISTER.—“A casquet of jewels. They are most fascinating as Legends, and none the less profitable for example, consolation, and encouragement because they cannot be certainly proved according to the canons of criticism. We commend them to all our readers, and most of all to Religious.”

MONTH.—“Well translated, and beautifully got up.”

TABLET.—“Father Collins has given us in this little volume a number of most beautiful Legends connected with the Cistercian Order. They are full of deep spiritual teaching, and are almost all authenticated.”

CATHOLIC OPINION.—“This beautiful little volume forcibly illustrates our constant nearness to the unseen world. The book is a compilation of anecdotes, full of heavenly wisdom, but its practical lessons are just such as appear foolish to this age.”

R. Washbourne, 18 Paternoster Row, London.

126



